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The reasonable nap

by Donald Hall

In nineteen ninety-three
I was up for the nba in
poetry. From the first day,
when I reckoned up the judges
and nominees, I claimed
A. R. Ammons would win the award.
Nevertheless, he won it.
When Archie walked past our table
toward the stage, I reached for
his hand and shook it like a good sport.
At the reception, the judges
one after another dropped their eyes
and said my stuff
was terrific. I went to sleep easily,
mildly let down, and woke
at three-thirty in murderous rage.

Three hours later, sleeping
for twenty minutes on the shuttle,
I reasoned with myself:
"Why should anyone win some contest?
Who, for instance? When did winning
an award mean you were *good*?
The Pulitzer Prize?
Don't be an ass. The fox is sensible.
Grow up. Go home. Take a shower.
Sit at your desk, and, as the kids
in high school said
with sarcasm, 'Go write a poem about it.'"

Donald Hall was named Poet Laureate of the United States in 2006.

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