



10-2009

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Recommended Citation

Quinn, Sarah (2009) "My Wholesale Romance and Thanks to Ted Hughes," *Inscape*: Vol. 29 : No. 2 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/inscape/vol29/iss2/4>

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My Wholesale Romance

by Sarah Quinn

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As I slowly made my way through the aisles
marveling at the enormity of a ten-pound jar of pickles,
the hugeness of six gallons of mayonnaise,
I noticed the free samples—grilled salmon segments,
marinated in garlic and herbs.
The sample boy, dark curls spilling out of his hairnet,
brushed my hand as he gave me the small plastic cup.

“It’s wild-caught,” he noted.

“Yes,” I said.

As he continued to distribute the samples
to an old woman buying calcium in bulk, to
a young mother with three children and two full carts,
I savored the wild-caught bite and pondered
the brief life of the salmon,
it’s long swim upstream before mating and death,
which are so often synonymous
when you are small and scaled.
I considered its hasty courtship, recognizing
that in some respects
the salmon carries out its affairs more elegantly than I.
I am edging closer to the sample boy
who may or may not still be in high school
and who, by Costco store policy,

cannot accept my phone number
nor in good conscience return my parting wink,
a final desperate flirtation as I
fervently wish for a toothpick.

Thanks to Ted Hughes

by Sarah Quinn

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Closing my eyes is a promise, a little trust
which I plant on your lips like a daffodil in March.
Caution to the wind, it's going to unfurl
every swish and swank of yellow, bite the air
with pollened pistils and snap. Too bad that cold wind's
coming,
clapping its hands over the blooms and bruising
their squinch-eyed faces.
They are green-stemmed.
With a sharp shock stalk sound they fall
when Mother brings the muddy scissors or Mary
steps on them with her boot and the heel goes
clench.