

## Eric Wayne Dickey

### Easy to Love You

What do the pine boughs say?  
That's easy enough, they say, *I love you*.

What does the crunching gravel say?  
That's easy, it says *I love you*, too.

In fact, the whole earth says *I love you*. We can put words in-

to the mouths of gravel,  
but we always turn around

at the end of the road:  
Our headlights search the night,

waving around long white  
carrots at the stars.

A soldier says to his enemy,  
*I love you* with bullets.

*I care about you enough*, he says,  
*to end your suffering*.

The dead soldier says *thank you*,  
*I love you, too*; his family does not.

Firing a gun is a long road,  
full of blind corner and potholes.

Wars come and go, soldiers live and die.  
And we keep making more of them

every time we have sex.  
We open our legs, and set them free.

# The Presentation

a woman draws arrows on a flipchart  
talking at the front of the room

she draws quickly, leaving the arrows incomplete,  
lines and dashes with sloppy triangles

the woman is pretty and talks fast  
her breasts shake as she moves

she draws more arrows  
that begin to swarm and swim

at her like sperm  
I start to get an erection

I'm in love with her now  
but I know I can't have her

not here, not like this  
I'm a married man, for crying out loud

but I'm drawn, moth like,  
to her flickering beauty

she talks about how we can blow  
job satisfaction

I can't believe she said those words  
looking right at me, no less

she follows the buttons down my shirt  
with her eyes and stops at my belt

I start to resist  
how am I going to tell my wife

who will surely take the kids  
and move in with her mother

I will eat dinners alone in my dark house  
while my children sleep in unfamiliar beds

the woman knows I can't live like that,  
not without my kids

she draws her attention to somebody else  
and I sigh in my chair

after the woman finishes her talk  
we all applaud and I walk up to her

looking into her eyes, I shake her hand  
saying, *thank you for that fabulous presentation*

## Toe Job

I clip the toenails  
of the old folks  
at the Crestview.

The tick tock of the clippers  
count down the seconds  
for this one here, Emma,  
close to the end.

Her toes twitch when I touch them,  
squeeze my fingers.  
My thumb gets tangled in the jumble.

These toes will never again  
fondle another's toes beneath the sheets.  
No running through grass or mud  
of which these toes once knew.

No giggling, no tickling,  
this is not my son  
resisting and wrestling,  
risking having his skin snipped  
or being cut too close to the quick.

Just the sound of Emma's shallow breath,  
of an oxygen tank valve,  
and the clicking clippers.

I spread the toes with my fingers  
and hold the cracked yellow sole in my palm.