

Don Durkee

How Turning Fifty-four Improved My Disposition

Got a peppermill from Ed and Jody.
Ed and Jody stop by in the evening.
Hand me this blue-starred package
and say how you're gonna love it, Dad,
which I doubt cause it's been years
since I loved a present on my birthday.
So, I prepare myself to look pleased
and I bust into the blue stars
and I see this crystal peppermill
and I say to Ed and Jody,
How'd you know?
and they answer how I'd been
hinting for years.
Then, out of orneriness I ask
how come it didn't register till now,
which gets a laugh.

So, I twist the top
and hear the crack of the grinding teeth
of my peppermill for the first time,
grinding the hard Hawaiian-blend corns
Ed and Jody chose special for me.
I toss a fistful onto my tossed salas
and take a bite.
Wonderful, I say to the assembly
that lets me know I got the answer right
this time.
I'm not comfortable with being pleased
for an audience
so when I'm alone with my peppermill,
I go to the sink and grind away
like a crazy man
just to hear the crack,
just to smell pepper fresh in the air.
Even crazier still I go to the deck in the dark
and grind Hawaiian-blend onto the backyard below.
The cats look at me like I'm nuts.
But I'm enjoying a little wickedness on my birthday,
like cat fur shedding at the Hyatt Regency
and I tell the cats
how getting the right gift on your birthday
makes you a little crazy,
which is good at my age.