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Poem by R. J. Keeler



The Right of the Sun to Die

The right of the pear tree to bear pear fruit
And the right of the apple tree to bear apple fruit
And the right of the Italian plum tree to bear plums
The right of the crows to eat the pears and apples and delicious plums
And then drop the partially eaten fruit on the earth below
And the right of ants and roly-poly bugs—woodlice—to clean the dropped pear or apple
or plum seeds of any remaining fruit
And of wild ground bees to clean the dropped seeds of any remaining fruit
Then the right of the true hawk or kestrel or even the eagle to raid the crows' nests and
lance and eat the near-featherless squabs, even the right to kill the parent-crows
Then drop the partially eaten crow corpses on the ground below or on the water of
shallow, brackish bays
Then the right of harbor crabs or earthworms to strip the squabs' bones of flesh

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Then the right of earthworms, after stripping the squabs' bones, to methodically go
back and cultivate the soil beneath the apple, pear, and plum trees
And the right of fly larva to reprise the picking of twice-cleaned bones to make them
evenly clean
And the right of the sun to die
After it exercises its right to swell to a red giant and incinerate the younger earth
And incinerate all the inner planets
And incinerate all known life: fruit trees, hawks, earthworms, roly-poly bugs, crabs, bees
Then the right of remnant dusts after the destruction of the sun and solar system
And eventually the right of all suns in the galaxy to die, become dust, or bear fruit
And the right of the entire Milky Way to either die or bear fruit
And the right of trillions of galaxies to swell up and either bear fruit or die
And the right of bugs and other sentients to predict these swellings and deaths and
bearings of fruit and suns and of final light
And not to have any right to return things to square zero or to kick over the game board
Or to despise, however incidentally, the movie as it plays, start to end, frame by frame
Only the right to change the reels as they are shown and consumed, one after another
Or if astronomically lucky, the right to splice the film as it breaks and the movie stops
and the house lights come back on momentarily

Art Information

- "[View of 2012 Venus Transit \[5\]](#)" © NASA Goddard Space Flight Center; Creative Commons license.



R. J. Keeler was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, and grew up in the jungles of Colombia. He holds a BA in Mathematics from North Carolina State University, an MS in Computer Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an MBA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Certificate in Poetry from the University of Washington. He is a recipient of the Vietnam Service Medal, Honorable Discharge, and his forthcoming poetry collection is titled *Detonation*.

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