

NATALIE SOLMER

---

The Old Woman and the Gull's Wing

I was twenty, maybe,  
when I saw her photograph.

In a small gray doorway she stood  
at the edge of Siberian spring,

her home a black womb behind  
the dull flowers of her housecoat.

She was brown and wrinkled  
and from her hand hung

a gull's wing. The book said  
she had just finished sweeping

her hut with the wing.  
The book said

she belonged to a reindeer herding people  
and winter's ice was lessening.

Dark mud and moss were beginning  
to show. Meanwhile,

I was shoveling Carolina clay,  
at the botanical garden.

I dodged scorpions, lizards, even  
a wild boar. Fire ants bit me

every day. My skin burned impatiently.  
I was newly in love. It was easy and deep,

but for the old woman  
at my mind's ledge—

her ferocity a well  
echoing, *just wait, just wait.*



## ABOUT NATALIE SOLMER

---

Natalie Solmer is a florist and an adjunct English instructor at Ivy Tech Community College. She received an MFA in poetry from Butler University, and her work has appeared in *Dunes Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Punchnels*, *The Louisville Review*, and *Mothers Always Write*. She lives in Speedway, Indiana.

HERON TREE

31 January 2016

[herontree.com/solmer1](http://herontree.com/solmer1)

