

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Max Heinegg: Three Poems

Max Heinegg · Tuesday, February 17th, 2026

Shepherd

To the doctors of Grace Cottage, VT, who tended to my mother

The good man takes the woman's hand to say
he has done this before
and will again
make the passage easier
and looking to me
with what wisdom I cannot help
but notice, in an age when we do not
dare to touch the dying,
how he does.

*

False Fall

A drought at the end of summer tricks
red maples into an early costume change.
We aren't supposed to be here either.

Warning signs hang nailed to the trunks
on the ambled trail to the reservoir
where teens swim and bougie dogs bathe.

To try and love our life despite the bitter
simultaneities. This week, for our students,
funerals instead of vacation. Car crashes,

hit by adult drivers, exhausted or drunk.
Savage luck, young bodies in the wrong space
and time. In our family, your tough mother

heading to chemo, to stay as long as she can.
My mother, choosing not to suffer, asking me

to bring her to Vermont for legal dignity.

Today, our children leave again for college,
may the house stay a nest. Aging, loved
our black cat stares down the frost

from the warm side of a bay window.

*

Two Months Before She Would Pass

On a walk around the outside of the pool
in Schenectady's Central Park
she took my arm and said
I am holding you
because you're here

which I tried to take as
because we were still here,
but I knew it meant I was
the only one there to hold.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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