

BEN SWIMM

## Bruce

she found the mouse under a crumpled cabbage leaf  
pink and furless as a kidney bean  
it was nestled in a furrow  
made by a soil clump its mother must have pushed aside  
the other workers wanted her to kill him  
with a rock or the rubber sole of her shoe  
to keep his teeth  
marks off the beets and carrots  
it would have been easy all of his parts too big  
for his blind little body  
did not look like something  
you would want to love  
but she liked him too much  
there in the field so she took him home  
and named him Bruce  
and brought him everywhere in a shoebox  
even to our house  
when she visited on another farm  
in another state  
she let him out on our table too small  
to pet we pointed at his translucent ears his splayed back legs  
that wouldn't even hold him up  
the front ones fumbling  
for the end  
of the pipette she fed him drops of milk from  
it was the summer  
we cried a lot  
we had moved from Alaska to be happier  
I could tell

you wished you never left  
some days you resented me  
we were always working  
it wasn't until the end of the season we let the weeds take over  
drove to the swimming hole  
each day  
began to laugh again