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How I Learned That My Feet Must Always Be On The Ground

Magpie the trickster makes a mistake,
flies in, I don't know why,
then says, "Gotta get out!
Gotta get out!" bashing the windows
where Sky seems to be waiting.
I chase Magpie round and round the room,
ceiling to floor, window to window,
and when I finally catch him,
he has blood on his head
and trembles in my hands.
I think of him as prize, as prisoner,
and make a step to take him to my friend,
when suddenly he stirs, whirs away,
and everything happens all over again.

The mistake was mine, not his.
I leap for him and grab
only a tail feather, not enough,
and when I finally catch him,
he has blood on his head

and trembles in my hands,
and this time I take him out
to where Sky waits, impatient with me,
and I say, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry,"
and Sun puts tears in my eyes
while Magpie makes a trail
through the air that I
can never follow.

I try to think of everything,
but Sun pokes me in the eye,
and Sky leans on me,
and my thoughts are very small.

magpie thinks only of flying
if he thinks at all.

Grace Butcher
from *The Seattle Review*

Grace Butcher, after 25 years, is a retired professor (emeritus) of English at Kent State University, Geauga Campus. She is also the founder and editor of *The Listening Eye* literary magazine. Her poems appear in *The Best American Poetry 2000* and have appeared in various magazines since the mid-60s. Ms. Butcher's most recent book, *Child, House, World*, won the Ohio Poet of the Year award for books published in 1991. Other books in print are *Rumors of Ecstasy...Rumors of Death* and *Before I Go Out Out On The Road*. Visit her website at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/3716> .