

**You Tell Me You Want to Live Close to Nature**  
**Joan Mazza**

You plan to have acreage, a garden, pots with herbs  
on every windowsill. You'll have a dog and cat  
or maybe two of each, and wildlife will gather  
on your property, a sanctuary. How lovely

the fantasy of back-to-the-earth, the simple life.  
I plant basil seeds in handmade flowerpots painted  
with dragonflies and flowers, with potting soil I store

in the garage. The mice have other plans. They carry  
birdseed from one side of the garage to the sack of soil  
that now grows sunflowers no matter what the packet says.  
They leave piles of shelled seeds and corn kernels between

the bookcases. Fleas and ticks must surely view me  
as a god who provides for all their needs. The squirrels  
breed and breed and leave their droppings, population

increasing with my generosity. My neighbor's cat  
kills a bird a day for lunch, leaves feathers on my porch.  
It's thirteen miles to the nearest supermarket, an hour  
to malls and theaters. Far from the main road, no traffic

noise, but when it snows, I can't get up my driveway's hill.  
Howling dogs on the adjacent property inform me  
they're cold and underfed. That cozy woodstove you envy

is ravenous for logs encased in ice when the power goes out.  
The possum isn't afraid of anyone, and the skunk knows  
what to do. My poodle scares off herons and wood ducks.  
Sighting a bear, she's a city dog. She doesn't have a clue.

**Joan Mazza** has worked as a medical microbiologist, psychotherapist, and she has taught workshops on understanding dreams and nightmares. She is the author of six books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self*. Her poetry has appeared in *Rattle*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Italian Americana*, *Poet Lore*, and *The Nation*. She lives in rural central Virginia.  
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