

The Weeds Are Streetwise

by
David Haskell

Born in the Valley's sugar beet slums,
Enduring the Eptam* water-runs.
Dodging hand-hoes and bed knives.
The weeds grow up streetwise.

Their parents survived the herbicide skid rows,
They learned to make it, anyway the wind blows.
And their children knew when their leaves uncurled,
They would be unwelcome guests in a monoculture world.

With Lillistons** chasing them down the beds,
Survival is the only thought that's left in their heads.
So they learn to hide out in the plant row,
And hang out in the ditches where the tail water goes.

Now those shady Solanaceaes, Hairy and Black,
Lead an army of seedlings on bivouac.
Soon army fatigue covers every bed top.
Another farmer just lost his tomato crop.

Now the weeds know all the survival rules.
They graduated from the UC herbicide schools.
Decorated veterans of many weed wars,
They terrorize their cultivated ancestors.

*The Brand name of a herbicide formulated by Stauffer Chemical.

**Cultivation equipment that features a rotary hoe.