

The New Criterion

Poems

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Taking the bull by the horns

by [Dick Allen](#)

When he approaches, it's best to meet him head on,
and grabbing the horns, force that mighty head
to bow low before you, putting all your upper body strength
into the struggle. If you've found the right grasp,
the one from above, the horns beneath your palms,
it will feel as if you're gripping two huge vertical handles,
pushing on them hard, enclosing them in fists
instead of pulling them towards you to open the stubborn cupboard
or gate or missile silo doors. You might be lifted
a few feet into the air. You might be shaken
side to side, horribly. In the blurry distance
there could be screaming crowds, but more likely
just a fence and butterfly weed and more pasture,
a dilapidated barn with no one working beside it,
so your struggle will be solely your own,
your panting, your screaming, the bull's bellowing
only heard and felt by you. The secret is ...

Dick Allen

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