

softwood

julia doughty

in gratitude to: mamma, trees & earth, shree maa & swami satyananda, sri swami satchidananda, amma, pema chödrön, jane & richard, ann & jerry, mel, zanne, sharman, canéla, jessika, bob, susan, hollis, all my teachers & friends & the ones involved in *ensemble*.

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i am proclaiming the best & the worst
all the same
automatic sprinkler system
unforeseen revulsion

a body turning into the second half of its story

one life becoming another

wind taking place in pine

why have such ideals

the mountaintop

getting up there & it's a brief time
to stay & see the panorama

and still thrills come in the gullies

a summer fig

forever and forever
but not forever young

and we were going to be together
we were going to figure it out
enough

even the stone house
showing signs of wear and tear

temperance isn't a law
but could be a personal moral code

the baby gives up paying attention
to what's inside the corral

wild horse

i veer off all my learning
 the words scatter out, slip
 off the ground
 i was taught to stand on

the baby lets go & hangs
 in her tentative standing suspension

crinkled loveland water reservoir lapping laughing into
 sand shore algae free duckland
 bill back under wing & scrubbing
 granite hill seams uplifted compressions
 like streams

bacterial cells multiply
 at relatively the same rate—
 we average the rates
 your fingerprint, the snowflake
 these bountiful storm clouds

the art scourged at the opening
 by the vindictive one

it's possible i hadn't really paid attention
 in the proper way
 these aberrant behaviors of hers
 probably genetic or neural

talk talk talk
 but i can really listen now

but next time i'm getting warm tea
 not iced water with my dinner

listen—la neige la nuit of the baby's sleeping sounds

the child goes into a wide-eyed sleepiness
 in the swing
 and in the freeze frame of a half second
 her head rolls to the side, eyes closed
 into her dream life deeps

softwood house
 coming up by hands
 going down
 by time, termite, & ant
 sitting rock
 rounded by rains

when asked if he'd fight if their army camp was attacked in afghanistan, he said yes.
 he knew that was a trick for his truth as a conscientious objector, that they would say he wasn't
 what he was claiming to be, a line drawn here, that you were either on one side or the other.
 he sees the war as one he can not be in because it was started from lies

*

the questionnaire
 asked of my lesbian life
 and had i been married
 divorced widowed from
 the other gender
 no place
 mentioned living with
 him for nearly eight years

when did you come out
 24
 when did you realize you were lesbian
 24

these odd distinguishing marks

*

she's from a little town in north carolina. until last year, it was dry, no alcohol. they found, a few
 years before, the clay soil was not only good for growing tobacco but also for vineyards. now
 one store sells wine and beer, despite the sin—outsiders put in the vines

wind drafts glide through the pass, at the beach get muscular

a couple coming down & around the pond, she's singing. they want to know if they're on the right way to the peak

*

how does one crazy woman in worn-out clothes know
to wait for the walk signal?

up corral canyon, find a faint trail that cuts down to the creek where, on the other bank,
someone's living. i've been seen before i know it. he just growls once, a wild cat. i can't see him
in the brush, just see a plastic jug, a twig-skewered beer can

in iraq the prisoners are kept naked, "softened up" with torture, put in sexual poses for
interrogation. no lawyer from here will help them, the interviewed professor says, because
they're thousands of miles away and there's no geneva convention rules to apply because it's
not, at this point, a war—they're criminals.
and the mothers with crying babies are doing their best to shush them in the no-war attacks

the dudleya will open out its flowers at night to drink in carbon dioxide & to safeguard its
exposed leaves & petals

heat the kind we're not used to
a tractor with no merciful
tailing winds
laid us down flat
the dog sprawled on tile
couldn't twitch
birds had heyday in tree shade

a few coughs here & there
 the baby's hot forehead oozing
 but she sleeps soundly
 "knock it off," from the neighbor's yard
 fifty year phrase still around
 these kind of high-end houses
 like something familiar from tv

there's somewhere else
 besides the same comforts

if any place is to go to
 then it's going off from
 any place that could be here

*

i get down the canyon
 in late day heat
 carmine blooms and poison oak in its green leaf stage
 aiming for a june dip in what might be left
 of the creek pool
 instead, i lie down in the bowl of hot dry sand
 not even a limy edged remainder of water left
 the cottonwood shivers
 as if still rooted in cool waters
 which it probably, deeply, is

baby cries
 crow flies
 crow takes macadamia nut
 pounds & rolls it on roof
 baby sucks four fingers
 holds the measuring cup, drops it
 pushes the play yard with her feet

what rims will fit in the mouth
 & what won't

after awhile it's hard to tell who's who
 if both presidential candidates
 are all for war

order falls out of itself
i stumble while holding the baby
the car oil burns off from all the miles
i see the lake as deep blue
like it's been through an easy storm
and i don't absorb that it's really not

you were in the holds of unsourced sorrows
and went to be paid
for whatever emotions you could play on your face
for the photographer
waves so high and low
and when you saw the show
there was your face at the end of the series
titled "complete happiness"

the child says why
because the pizza deliverer who knows her so well
who also has only a few teeth in his poor mid-life—
he says why she says why

9/11 commission's report is delivered & done
what we didn't know & what we did
what could have been

the ones who knew me then
frown brow and ask, where have you been
all these years?

but they don't stay to hear my answer
they turn and talk to the young
war resister

she turns the wheel
 to the right
 to head to work
 she'd rather be home
 with the baby
 tho she can't see
 soon the child will
 be walking all over
 her homeland

some people, i'd read, believed just living
 to be the act of sacredness

after lunch lying under the lull of the lullaby clouds

a man on a horse trots by, says
 it's a good day for that

all passages of these hills
 run to the meadow
 where sometimes flat lakes surface

if i remember a plant's use
 it's from regular use
 an ordinary relationship
 not rare sighting

passing hikers:

—movement is a definition of work
 so if they're moving, they're working

—well, she smiles, that's certainly
 one way to look at it

*

will the child move into terrible twos
 yelling nos or continue to be sweet
 and quietly, smiling, turn the book's pages

to be a butterfly but she doesn't like
 wearing polyester
 to be a dog with spotted cheeks
 & perky ears
 to be sleeping beauty in a yellow fluffy dress

*

boys here in the sumac
 yelling, throwing dead yucca spears
 warring
 leaving the boy with glasses out

they were at the pond jumping into the freezing cold water
 they're the ones now at the trailhead
 car doors all open radio already blaring
 the game they're cheering to the scores

a leaf twists & turns
 scuttles on the ground

seasons keep coming around
 like and unlike themselves

sleeping sleepy in the rhythm of my breath
 windows shake & rattle lightning thunderous jolts
 i keep on in dreamland sleep-song breathland
 winter's deep slumber
 a week of long longed-for rest

a stream runs where it's been dry for two years
 full fledged, grown water going on a path
 that's been there for it, for just such
 a falling from a storm

what gets picked up & moved is
 what goes with this territory

