

**THE WAY WILDERNESS CURIOUSLY BENDS ALONG**

The committed leap of the small dog  
to the wall, then a polite probe  
into my lap. The dog licks me, rubs  
its wet nose all over my knee. I allow it,  
its owner at my side. Yesterday a road  
became a silver fish bearing down on us, fishy,  
scaled, ever searching—migrant thinking  
coming at me. I have lived in this city  
four years and nine months, though it has come  
to feel less important to count time.  
There is still so much to do.  
A skunk waddles to shelter. We expect  
goats in the field across from us  
in summer. My child holds his tongue  
between pursed lips while he tests  
his hands. Are they strong enough  
to fully snap the closure he holds?  
They are not. Yet.

## THE LANDSCAPE UNFOLDS BEFORE HIM

Creeping cotilda ground cover  
reaches the edge of its pot  
and begins to spill over. He doesn't get  
his way and folds a bit downward.  
He can be lifted up by two hands  
around his chest. On the fallen  
oak trunk, he shimmies out  
and loops a string around a burl  
thinking that with it  
he can hold the entire thing  
together. I watch an adult friend coax  
him down since the trunk's balancing  
on the rounded edge of a smaller stump  
and rocking with his weight.  
He walks toward me, reaches out  
for my extended hand. We are on a hill.  
We look out over our city neighborhood.  
Can we find our house? This involves  
several minutes of discussion.  
The wild oat is high and nearly ready to seed.

## VIEWS TERMINATING AT ALL TIMES IN GREENERY

To resist words, all of them, and discover  
a turn in the street carved  
into the side of a hill, bisected  
so northbound runs low  
against a high retaining wall of ivy,  
while southbound perched above glimpses  
the ocean. An afternoon  
without metonymy. A walk through  
the rambling city park. A blanket  
laid just off the path struck out in  
a pine grove uphill from  
a golf course. Two children.  
Each wants a chance  
to throw an apple core into  
the underbrush. Each wants to lay  
down and look at the sky  
through the canopy. Two apples.  
An airplane bisects the scene.

## CREATING WITHOUT FEAR

Shallow colors and in one stroke  
a bright register—  
the evening sun over the valley  
of packed-in low houses,  
flashes on a window that could be a signal  
to me—wake up. I have come to collect  
the children. Wake up. There's a puddle  
I cross in canvas shoes. There's a neighbor  
to acknowledge. I can collect  
myself. Each step back into life—enter.  
The translucent space of direct sun  
through the eucalyptus. The squeal  
of a child running, looking behind him,  
hoping he's being chased.  
It's hard not to stay.

## SOURGRASS

Light hits every leaf vein, neon-yellow petals  
shadow each other. It comes every year,  
the sourgrass taking over, yellow flowers, ternate  
leaves, nothing at all like grass. My kids pick one each,  
gnaw the stem, saying it won't kill them.  
But something is coming for us, in the wind  
rushing off the Pacific, over the low hills and past.  
It will brush bare things we know, polishing them down  
to what we ought to. We approached  
the problem. Established an erosive governance,  
the move to California, the ever-sought  
day-to-day of citrus, pine, pelican,  
now not a thing I feel I deserve.  
I sit, chilled, as the light on our hedge becomes  
an entire landscape. Can't I at least keep that? Didn't I pull  
two poems from the magazine and wasn't it their take  
on abundant lemon trees that won me over? Turns out  
we have too many—what we can't give away, rots.  
My kids say, it won't kill them.  
They throw the dusty citrus against the fence,  
pale gray marks. They create miniature houses,  
fill them with food that won't kill the miniature  
beings inside and check them every week  
for growth. My kids jump from the top step  
to the concrete sidewalk, screaming, This won't  
either! I'm told that sourgrass is pickle grass  
is yellow woodsorrel is oxalis stricta and will be gone  
by April. I'm asked to come and sit in the weed,  
chew the stem. Join the children eating it.

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