

## WATERSHED

We were freshmen  
in this Nebraska town  
come in from a cold rain  
to gather cross-legged and shoulder to shoulder  
in Middlebrook parlor, to sing-- a late  
evening devotional.  
Voices excited the space  
like the hollow of an instrument  
a wet mingling of breath  
and my eyes caught yours. You smiled.

One year passed and spring suddenly loosened  
the creek's voice.  
The sun still died early enough to ignite  
the tips of new buds  
to teach the naked trees to flare,  
skeletons fanning embers as we  
walked after dinner. Black leaves  
made our bed as a beaver slapped  
water warning us to keep back.

Our first summer in the mountains  
smelled of late afternoon rain  
softening the dirt path that left our porch.  
We took the tops of large boulders in two leaps  
your hand wet in mine, our baby daughter  
on my back  
and giggling at this rough dance.  
Thunder split the trunks above  
chasing us to a poor cover of scrub oak  
where I watched your shirt  
darken against your breasts.  
I tasted rain from your cheek.  
Going back, we stole green apples from a branch: juice like  
sweet pins in my jaw.

Now you are asleep in our tall house  
your face pressing the pillow you've kept since first  
grade.  
It is still too cold to be spring  
but too warm not to think of the  
sound of water.  
Now I will peel back my corner of our quilt

to slide under  
both of us in our single place.  
My hand is on your side  
as you breathe slowly  
a careless raft tugging me into open  
water.