

DROUGHT

By Gail Rudd Entrekin

Give me the coast still lush with its hydrangeas
bursting with blues like lacy explosions
of night sky all over the morning lawns,
the hanging baskets no one needs to water,
languidly trailing their extravagant
streams of trumpets and bells.

Here in the valley, the rose stems stand
like pickets, bitten and bitter
doomed in the dusty heat. Early Girl
tomatoes, late and hard, hang
limp-leafed over their cages no matter how
long I stand, aiming my snaky hose. Water
is what we chiefly need.

Everywhere the planet
is pulling in her generous green
folding it up forever in the vast trunk
of history. She is taking down the curtains
of rain and giving them away to someone
in another dimension who will treat
them gently, she is rolling up
the atmosphere with its cigarette holes
and moth-eaten diatribes and when

she has packed her bags and slammed
the door and left us looking at each other
in silent shame, like bad children,
we will say, *We didn't do it.*
It was someone else.

MANGO

A mango from the green lawn,
the heft of it, smooth and heavy
like a breast, the way a living thing
holds the heat of the sun and transfers
it back into the cool of your hand.

Even a rock in the river in the summer
heat when you lay the length of your
chilled body fresh from the snow melt
water into its lap, its whorled contours
share its savored heat with your bones
its porous cells glowing and vibrating
through sunset and well into the dark
fading slowly into cool and dew
by morning.

The friendly mango
glistens wetly in your hand. It's good
to bite it, take it into the warmth
of your mouth, comprehend it
this small piece of life
returning
to the earth.

RAIN

Something grey and fuzzy, pussy willow
in the sound of rain – the way we pull
the soft blanket around goose bump
trance state go lost – even as children
we went out to it, sat camp stool
umbrella – or snuggled under the porch
roof – best sound effect – never enough
rain out here in the arid West
missing the giant roaring black sky
Midwest rolling thunder coming in
ozone prickling the skin counting
between flash and rumble – pouring
sheets of rain so the whole view
is vertical water over lawn and
trees and pool – instant drenching
on a hot day, kids running puddles
the relief of it – all's well with
moisture moving up, gathering, coming
back down – gallons of water
rushing along the gutters – down
drains so fast the back waters

pressing on the front till the streets
begin to fill and we can wade
up to our ankles in cool – You, she
said, are the most generous
person I know.

RETURNING

The wild leaves loosen the way
flesh separates from the bone
slowly begins to respond
to gravity's tug, come down,
come down

everything falls
flutters slips drips or pours
down into the earth from which
it emerged, from which it is made,
comes home.

The mouse in the trap,
tossed into leaf mulch,
loyal Smokey, buried under the live oak,
Anna with skin stretched taut
over her tiny skeleton, one eye on the door,
even you and I, your hand shaking on my slack breast
our breath huffing along,

even we

loosen our hold on the words --

drop facts like tiny papers

down onto our knobby feet

planted

– ah, here we are again –

planted like small movable trees.

Rootless, even airborne, but like

the loosening leaves, we are

scheduled to return.

THE AXE

We come with our axes to listen, our axes
sharp and heavy in our hands; we kneel;
we believe we will listen, and for a time
we do listen, our ears attuned to nuance.

As the broad flat sky seeps and flickers
between the trees something blue flashes,
a bird but larger, an assemblage of blues
between the leaves out on the road, a bike,
a man on a bike, a man with silver hair
and a weathered face on a bike, gone.

Now we are listening again, something
twitters, something downriver plops,
many small things, believing (we are so
silent) we are gone, begin to patter and rustle
in the trees.

But the axe has begun
to glow in our hands, its weight burning
into our shoulders. We are like boys
with new slingshots. We stand and sit again,
try to wait. What are we waiting for?
The tree and the axe have known each other
forever, pull toward each other, we are only
the delivery system, what will we do
with all this wood?

Bio:

Gail Rudd Entrekin has taught poetry and English literature at California colleges for 25 years. Her books of poems are: *Rearrangement of the Invisible* (Poetic Matrix Press, 2012), *Change (Will Do You Good)* (Poetic Matrix Press, 2005), nominated for a Northern California Book Award, *You Notice the Body* (Hip Pocket Press, 1998), and *John Danced* (Berkeley Poets Workshop & Press, 1983).

Poetry Editor of Hip Pocket Press since 2000, she edits the press' online environmental literary magazine, *Canary* (www.hippocketpress.org/canary). She is editor of the poetry & short fiction anthology *Sierra Songs & Descants: Poetry & Prose of the Sierra* (2002) and the poetry anthology *Yuba Flows* (2007).

Her poems have been widely published in anthologies and literary magazines, including *Cimarron Review*, *Nimrod*, *Ohio Journal*, and *Southern Poetry Review*, and her poems were finalists for the Pablo Neruda Prize in Poetry from *Nimrod International Journal* in 2011. She and her husband live in the hills of San Francisco's East Bay.

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