Until I Was Older, I Believed Swimming Was Learning to Breathe in the Womb

Deborah Goodman
UNTIL I WAS OLDER, I BELIEVED SWIMMING WAS LEARNING TO BREATHE IN THE WOMB

It is October. It is raining. The whole countryside melts into a nondescript gray. A green Ford travels down Highway 96 headed for Woodville. Now and again, logging trucks pull onto the road, the Ford slows, then speeds around them. Most of the farms have chickens, a few pigs under oak trees. The ground is wet, full of a dark odor: feces, the weight of the dying season. Even the houses are gray, the summer white of their paint littered with rain, roof-run. The Ford passes a pasture where horses graze. In the foreground, a mare crops some last bit of grass. Beside her lies a colt, half hidden in the wetness, feet frozen in a run, nostrils flared, the inside red, feathered, almost like gills, as though in last moments he thought of a warm sea womb and perhaps would remember how to swim, would somehow break the crest of this foam, would rise trumpeting, calling the mares, the fleet white stallions home.