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The Valley Where We Live

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The Valley Where We Live

A doe stands in the garden, nibbling lettuce
we don't care to pick. OK, we say to the sun.
Between the deer's legs rabbits walk their awkward way.
The valley where we live is steep but not cloistered.
Anything mild may enter: rain showers,
balloons, snails, dictionaries, timothy, milk.
Any born violence soon rises of its own energy
and spins off the rim of our horizon.
We make up gentle nicknames to their memory:
dust devil, hooligan, zigzag, roughhouse.
Potatoes turn earth itself sweet, we say,
burying our mild dead where we must.
We like poplar trees, how they take the quaking wind
and calm it with slender semaphore.
Sometimes, though, wandering the upper paths,
we hear from beyond our valley muffled shouts,
insistent chant of engines run uphill.
Then the poplars shudder without wind.
Then we pace our sheep-cropped lawns meaning to do
whatever we have forgotten. Like children
standing the first time at a cliff's windy edge
we wonder what it is keeps us from leaping.