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Poem by Barbara Edelman



The Naming of Small Things

(1)

I've slept so well here at the sill
of open window, pillow nearly touching
the screen. This land is rainforest, charged
by rhythms of cicadas, riffing in and out by

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day then blasting symphonic into darkness,
from tymbals in the abdomens of courting
males, a pattern that repeats and repeats
until I listen for variations in pitch, in
accent; variations within variations,
the wide night calling out—
sleep brilliantly, pay attention.

(2)

One more night before I drive back
into infuriating news. Yesterday, lost
on an unblazed trail, I hiked into a
rhododendron tunnel so long I ended up
in a neighboring state. A small fear
burrowed in me like a tick. I kept yanking
webs from my face and arms. The galls
on oak trees made me uneasy.

(3)

Tonight, a crash near my head.
I sit up, believing—on the trail
out of sleep—that a bear hurled itself
against the cabin wall. Did I leave
food out? No other sound. A branch
must have fallen on the roof and remained.
What makes me think then of the pain
at the tip of my months-old incision,
ignored for weeks? I touch it. The intruder
lump, cut out, has reemerged, in the fat
of my calf. Strange for a supporting limb
to share the name of a baby animal.

Art Information

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Barbara Edelman is the author of the poetry collection *Dream of the Gone-From City* (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2017) and of two poetry chapbooks. Her work has appeared recently in the journals *One*, *Raleigh Review*, and *Askew*. She teaches writing at the University of Pittsburgh, where she also coordinates the Writers' Café.

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