

## **america chose to drown in the desert**

i have heard the orchestra of children discovering that we cage any thrust of the garden before it can become the garden that we take the clay to hold our flowers before they can take the clay to carry water to their mouths that we are all limb and muscle and lost vein and we have never had the heart for a nation that could survive the distinction between breathing and being forced to consume an unhealthy air a measured and wild sharing of the landscape we can compost sure but we compost the native beauty before we can think to name the bloom before we ever thought to ask what the bloom was already called we are staggeringly qualified to end all life on this planet because we have already pulled a nation of mountains and rivers into the desert to bum-rush the emerging children of the i cannot stop thinking about the children as they ask for their parents in a way so raw and searching that it frames the love i have for my own children as something like a funeral avoided a funeral held without bodies because all of the bodies have been separated from each other all of the bodies that once held each other cultivated distilled the purples hope can give into a perfume that rises towards the moon above the brush in a desert america chose to drown in when all america needed to do was allow each foot step to be a gift in the old way it was a gift but instead we opened our throats to meet the sun instead we looked into the eyes of children separated from their parents and called their brokenness the flood we'd been waiting for

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**[you might choose to read these poems]**

i told my children you might choose to read these poems in the bareness and anxiety of your young adulthood while you search for me in the thousands and thousands of poems i've written so that i could explore so that i could explain so that i could hide and lie about some small terribleness and it gives me endless joy that you will find me here right here right now as bare as you are but feeling no anxiety at all because i am with my children in some small way in the future when i love you even more than i already do because that's how real love works it grows with the epic it encircles the epic until you cannot tell why or how any of this began but you know you know you know that if there is such a thing as a soul it exists to be buoyed by moments like this

*originally appeared in Whale Road Review*

## **EMILY AS SHE DROPPED THE LANTERN AT MY FEET**

I always wear cotton  
just in case Emily needs me  
to go up in flames.

I get to be the one that holds  
her fire! How tender  
of her to chose me

from the crashing to burn  
just enough for her to lead  
our children to safety.

How terrible it must be for a man  
to have less of a purpose  
than to be burned like me.

*appeared in Hotel Amerika*