

# Above the Estuary

(Before the trail closure through Cascade Preserve)

*Dixie Partridge*

The river's long curve  
enters the bay in streak between meadow  
and forest—algae green of freshwater,  
kelp green of salt.

We've come up alone  
through the gradual unfolding of alder  
and spruce, over the opening slopes  
to grasses bowed slightly toward us, tall  
as our youngest last year at twelve—always ahead  
on a trail—his dark hair bobbing above reedgrass  
with each spring in his step.

From this view the river's blue-opal glaze  
melts rather than flows into sea level.  
Small curvatures signal a white grace  
of egrets—they wade easy in mud  
through summers far back  
to our daughters like water birds  
skirting high tide.

Always attending,  
mists turn in morning  
to single drops on tips of pine  
where we've hiked coastlines with toddlers  
packed on our backs, voices buoyant  
with wings of snow-plovers  
through tangible air.

We sit hugging our knees on steep ground  
until light slants low and lacy  
through hemlock, roots muscular in the grip  
of Pacific slopes.

O preserve  
this host of plants  
and sky, the drift of silence  
over limpet and pool . . .  
And admit our rim  
of remembrance, the maritime constance  
in small rills of the heart.