

Margaret Ritchie

the geologist and me

the map is on the dashboard
and i am searching for landmarks
though i have never been here before.
we are looking for fossils;
i told you about this place
and you related the mountain
is really one big rock underneath
which evidence of ancient life
is documented.

and driving now beneath chinks
and crevices we are sheltered only momentarily
by overhanging granitic shelves or trees
conforming upright to the steep topography.
and we swing carefully on the edges
of curve and curves. i am certain
we are proof enough of life
where we are so alone.

and if we take anything home with us
you will call it evidence. i know rocks
and you know them yet, our faces and bands
powdered with dust you
will display them polished and labeled.
i leave them behind like a map, unused,

out of a certain fondness i have
for memory. let me

remember this;
i would find this place
if i cared to.

Not Just You and Me

If I need inspiration
I could look
to the whale we saw
and the big fat island
out there
where the seals swim.
But that is where
I discovered suns,
magnetic,
that fall strange
behind thin clouds
strung like sly weeds
across the water.
Yes, there was something
I needed there,
like a box of old books,
or a sewing needle;
I could have used that moment
to mend our leaking boat,
or taken a line
from the look on your face
and pressed it
like a keepsake
between the pages.
But driving down the road now

the desert is asleep,
the night empty and large
as a bowl. And if
in my thoughts
I weave
inspiration
I pull it
over my head
roll down the sleeves
and curl into
the night, the black sky
wooly and wide
enough for us all.

On the Porch with My Daughter

I think about Susan
her large calloused feet
like leather boots.
There
she swings slightly
to the radio,
her face speckled
with the lazy sun,
her weight
bending trees.
Now she appears
in her cotton dress
to ask me something,
her blonde hair soft
her tongue pink
as a baby's palm.
Then the cat, stalking
behind her, looking for someone

to feed it, the kitten
whose first remembrance
of warmth was a plastic dish,
who never really learned
to clean herself until once, she bled.
I took her tiny claws,
rimmed them one by one,
down to the pink.