

## Water the Babies

It's so bucolic I take a photograph.  
The kids, 2 and 4, soon-to-be 3 and 5.  
Him with his peach, her with her plum.  
They help drag out roots and heave rocks.  
They peer into the hole they just helped dad dig.  
They wear oshkoshes and galoshes.  
They have cherub curls and blueberry stained cheeks.  
Who needs preschool when we have this?  
It's actually Arbor day and we are actually  
planting trees. Twelve of them.  
We are making sure they're straight,  
throwing compost and manure into the hole.  
Using plastic snow shovels to push the soil back  
then patting it down with our chilly palms.  
There are bright blue skies and marshmallow clouds.  
The forsythia is bursting, and my god  
how much happier the plum seems  
now that she's out of her bucket.

It's so tragic I won't take a photograph.  
Of how the shovel becomes a weapon  
Of how they bicker over who gets the blue one.  
The little guy tantrums and whines  
desperate to watch another movie.  
They haven't been kissed by their grandparents.  
Their bosom buddies are barricaded  
down the block, while their parents  
squander too many hours peering into screens  
reading scientific studies of uncertainty.

Along the red fence, a peach a plum  
a peach a plum a peach a cherry  
a peach. And in the back, honey crisp  
fuji, gravenstein, and the grand pollinator  
granny smith (my beloved fruit — tart  
crisp, old-soul-ish). Still to come,  
ever-green Anjou, and that lush  
thin-skinned Bartlett.

By mother's day, there are fuzzy donut peaches  
the size of a quarters and heaps of hard green cherries  
the size and look of coffee berries.  
So long as we ward off the peach leaf curl  
we will have fruit for our august ice cream.

Whatever happens, we do this:  
we wake, eat breakfast, get dressed  
brush our teeth.

We go outside.

We water the babies.