

WILDCAT CANYON

We've driven the ridge by the bay all morning,
each turn another IMAX theater
in surround, so lovely it's almost boring.
I've always been a lousy traveler; I prefer
the guidebooks' glib summaries,
every trip neatly packaged, tourists posed
at the exact moment of discovery. As a child

I spent vacations in the backseat
never looking up from my book.
Mountains were just distant lumps
of dirt, my parents constantly calling
for my rapt gaze. Even now I ruin it
by planning; so busy fiddling with the map,
I nearly miss the view. But you say, *Forget it*,
you know where you're going, and sure enough,

soon you're twirling barefoot in the foamy grass.
It likes growing here, you announce.
For the first time, I can imagine you
in your new apartment, your lawn fringed
and dew-tipped, standing at attention,
your body a thing about to happen.

So long I've heard your tired voice each day,
fingernails clicking your office keyboard.
We'd meet outside for lunch, then lay the Tupperware
in front of us—jelly bleeding through sandwich bread,
a wilted bowl of greens we called salad.
I never thought you'd leave home, streets
always calling the same names. There are places

not on any map, views brochures can't show you.
See these redwoods peel back their soft skins
in layers? Here fruit is smooth enough to rub
against your cheek. And you've already found the path
to the lake, blue coaster set at the canyon's bottom,
as if your whole life had come down to this.

I can see your windows open to the night,
I can smell lemons in your hair, while outside
tourist traffic makes its rhythmic push
past all the things we've seen today,
all the things I may never get to see.
There's nothing in this world
I don't want.