A Lamb by Its Ma

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CHASE TWICHELL

A Lamb By Its Ma

Just before it rains, the lilacs thrash weakly,
storm light heightening the clusters drooping
at their peak of scent,
wind running through them like slow water,
then a splash, mood swing:
leaves spangled with drops of light from inside the storm.
Mary made us come inside if there was lightning,
flapping a white towel to call us back.
We hung around the kitchen drinking tea till it cleared.
She brought us tea at bedtime.
A good cup of black tea,
and you’ll sleep like a lamb by its ma.
She told us that our parents loved us, that their war was theirs alone.
She said it in the charged air, in the scent of their absence from the house,
their clean absence.
If thunder came at night, she told about the brave and faithful dogs of Scotland,
how a shepherd knows where his lamb has gone
by bits of wool in the wire.