

## Updraft and Breathing with Boulders

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# Updraft

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*Carol Barrett*

Outside Mother's Café, a man in waders  
and hoodie blows leaves from the patio,  
jetpack strapped to his back

like an astronaut's gear. Any moment  
he could rise with loose billows  
of aspen into the bloom of clouds.

I sip my out-of-season berry smoothie,  
wondering what heights might be  
imagined for ordinary leaves.

Near the window, two women perch  
on high stools, one in dreadlocks  
and brown leggings, the other's coif

ribboned with grosgrain. They are  
trading stories, sympathy mulching  
the tendrils of words. Outside

our guardian gardener stoops to untangle  
bits of crinkled paper from the rounded  
clumps of grasses and prickly pines,

hitches a wide shovel to his shoulder  
and departs. Thus we make our small  
order of things, our breakfast of what

has been and what may be, eyes  
on the sky, its wind-stoked  
summons, its dogged waywardness.

# Breathing with Boulders

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*Carol Barrett*

Skies undulate with the landscape  
here – plains curving like blown glass  
while tumbleweed skip the road,

bump along like gyroscopes  
catching in the sage. Patches of snow  
still cling to earth where rocks

shelter them from the afternoon  
sun. Ahead, three horsemen, and dogs  
guiding cattle down the gulch.

I slow, then slow again, keeping  
pace with the land where I have come  
to let the losses of the last year

roll out, their shadows lending  
a cautious look back. Already  
in the rear-view mirror the clouds

have turned steel blue. Now the cows  
wend across my path, despite  
running dogs barking commands.

I slow, and slow. One chocolate cow  
meanders in front of the car, stops.

I nod. I wait, the revenant gap

between this one and a swaying  
comrade growing. I allow  
the space she has signaled, grace

seeping into my braked body  
like a damp rain on the prairie.  
I breathe with the boulders.

Finally, she resumes her journey,  
deliberate as the wind on Highway 31.

Another follows. Another. I watch

the whole lumbering parade.  
Such are the guides I am given,  
timing exquisite as lichen

tracing patterns in the rock.