

Death of a Daughter

Her forehead was hot under my hand
That summer. I would sit mending
By her bed when I could. One of her brothers
Who herded sheep for his grandfather
Would bring her bunches of mountain stars,
Paintbrush, daisies, and pirgantha.
She would hold them until she grew weak,
Fingering the leaves, smelling the meadows
She once ran in. At night before I lowered the window,
A wind wandered down from the canyon,
Whisking across fields of lucerne,
Filling the room with sage and juniper.
The corn ripened, the calves fattened,
Wool filled out on the lambs.
In July, there were cherries to can.
We spoke of the quilt we'd make that winter.
On the first morning of September,
Her forehead was cold beneath my hand.
I saw the open window;
The lucerne waved in the wind
Rushing toward the mountains.

—Cara M. Bullinger