

GRANITE

Nancy Kuhl

*(Avalanche or Avenue—) every heart asks which*

—Emily Dickinson



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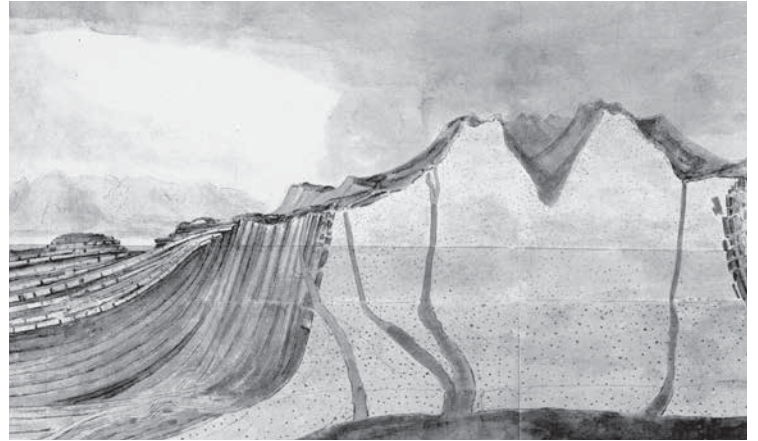
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When I began to tell it, you said: *try to make something sensible rather than something beautiful*. One of us has gotten it all wrong.

Burnt tongue or bee sting:  
a minor wound might become the heart  
of the matter (who knows now which  
bleary instant, the exact damage?).

Then moonlight with its grim  
suspicions.

When I couldn't hold it  
in mind, the story took shape in my lungs.

A common literary theme: *difficult*  
*circumstances can be changed*. Remember

Man's *inhumanity to man*? That is:  
sometimes *circumstances* means *a man*,

not *difficult* so much as *vicious* or *lethal*  
and *changed* means *one of us has to go*

or *no one is safe*. Sometimes in a novel  
a rising moon marks a revelation, a turn

in the plot. In the real world, in your actual  
life, has moonlight ever changed anything?

A father spends years perfecting  
his hatred. One daughter is a double

agent: under cover or going to ground.  
One records everything in the margins

of paperbacks. Summer holidays,  
they strolled in humid air like any family

(nobody says a word – this distinguishes  
them from the families in the books).

This family, this suburban dead-end  
family—they use silence like a rope.



It's nothing special; anything  
knitted is made of knots.

Shadow  
falling: a fraction, a trace, a figure's  
recognizable shape. That's *sequence*;  
try to name *function*.

If her life were  
like a magic show, what would be  
the trapdoor opening to the grimy  
crawl-space beneath the stage?

A magician tips his hat. Some-  
one's daughter turns into a bird.

