

HIDDEN BEACH

Today I drank deeply of blue sky and glittering cottonwoods,
of lake-freshened breezes and the buzz of fat bumblebees.

Today sun cupped my face like a warm palm.

Beauty was everywhere and I thanked God
even as I remembered the wildfires out west,
wreckage of a hurricane in Louisiana,
floods in the northeast, subways half-filled
with the Atlantic.

And that couple with the toddler.

How the terrified mother called a neighbor
from her cell phone. How they found the bodies later,
trapped in their small basement apartment.

I thought of that immigrant woman clutching her child
as ice-black water rose, the merciless moment
she had to breathe ocean into her lungs
and I said out loud, *Where were You?*

How could You let this happen?

No answer except diamonds sparkling on lake water.

The certainty of beauty and the certainty
that we are all going to die, none of us knowing
if our deaths will be as ghastly
as that mother's and father's and child's.

I was glad their horror was over.

And I'll say it, I said a prayer for them
at the hour of their death, because what do I know
about time or hope. Or faith.