



7-1-1997

Riddle

Nancy Baird

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Recommended Citation

Baird, Nancy (1997) "Riddle," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: Vol. 37 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol37/iss3/4>

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Riddle

The ice has vanished from the smoldering
stream, weeping fingers of winter slid
from the splintered trees.

The canyon I am learning through my feet
is secretive and dull, its bluefire gifting
the swelling city and lake. Spring is late
here and melancholy . . .

this morning a mountain lion leapt
down the narrow road
looking for something to kill.

My child is troubled with fears
of abandonment. How will you find me
if I am lost here, or here? She pushes
her face into the wind,
perhaps remembering another rush
of air, a freefall, an entry of blood, water
and loss.

I learned early the limits of love.
Children can be given only the residue
of a heart struggling to heal itself,
the remainder of a spirit seared with passion
and ambition.

And does it matter if I croon to this child

I will never leave your bright eyes, your
sturdy little body?

She knows a lie. She
must turn from the hunter,
run home
with lilacs in her teeth.

—Nancy Baird