

Judith Chalmer

Spiral

A basket with one clasp undone—  
the faint call each night of an owl—

red stone ledges, layer on layer—  
I could root forever in the leaves

and roughened faces, scarves  
with my sister's scent lasting for months,

wooden drawers with all their junk,  
furniture cracked by long ago forbidden

jumping and be happy— but for something  
aggrieved, a sorrow born

with the first banging heart and tied  
for generations in a pocket, in a vein,

a woodland crevice filled  
with moss. The days are hard to track

though there's a clock in every room  
and a new basket, strange bright spiral,

wide as a sun, fastened by someone  
very good to my sky white brick wall.

the visit

the touch- maybe not this soft since childhood - one  
the smile - you're really here - one  
the how could this be one  
the cranked-up bed, the call-button one  
the impossibly - all of this - one  
the lucky one  
the moaning one  
the remembering one  
the forgetting one  
the medicated one  
the hula-hoop delirium one  
the gray couch where we read together one  
the eyes that can't, won't, will never look away  
but then it's time again to go one  
the monitor beeping one  
the spasm one  
the single spoonful, then another one  
the quivering one  
the quiet one  
the one sorry, then both sorry one  
the tired now one  
the softly stepping, door left half-open one

water's edge, winter light  
a silver lid closing,  
the tide lifting, falling  
the last one  
untold one  
unmeasured one

on the way to meet each infant grandchild

shift: line of brow, of eyelash, wince of something taking up space  
in the belly, of cold, of weeping, of dark and of light, of lifting,  
of swaying and bouncing, lines wrinkled and red, of wanting,

of wiping, of ankle fold, of watching and watching, of breathing  
and watching, of hoping, of patting, of shoulder, of center line,  
broken line, of braking, of trusses and railings, of trembling,

of going and going, of gripping, of letting go and speeding,  
speeding, not looking, just going and banging, reckless  
and weak, faster, and hopelessly hard into love