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An essay on youth

This is the bounty, an extra minute
from kitchen to car. This is a claim

enough to fill a day. Green life,
an oval leaf, or a serrate,

ball of sap on a red tabletop,
sneakers down a cicada sidewalk.

There is everything to do.
There is the release and clasp

of memory and the time time time
of task. It is not to be missed,

seconds pinched from the pliant stem.
There is a boat moving quickly

too close to the shore, a dog nearby
panting in the brush. There is the pit,

your toes just over the crumbly edge,
and this moment you may not

remember, in which the future
appears cloudier than it must

now appear to the girl you see
swimming in the distance

through pearl gray water, her slim
neck drawing the whole landscape.

An essay on age

It was a day to sing the praises of fire,
to bow low to its purpose, smudge

and destruction, toes stretched apart,
blouse opened, our bodies gathered

into their warmest folds. It was a day of mists,
of freezing and love. Now the light

when it returns will be kinder.
Now the moon will dominate the dogs,

sending them wild into the burdock
and we will have them for hours on their backs.

This is the bright snap of apple, catch
in the throat— you realize you have loved.

You blow hard on the flames and the day
like any other day is remembered

mainly for lips, for the way we stand hip to hip
in sheets of rain, covered just enough to manage.

Judith Chalmer
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Judith Chalmer lives in Burlington Vermont. She is co-translator with poet Michiko Oishi of *Deepening Snow*, bi-lingual haiku and poetry, (Plowboy Press, March 2012), and is Director of VSA Vermont, a nonprofit devoted to arts and disability. She loves late afternoon light, quiet water, and mindless repetitive motion.