

HILLERY STONE

Coyotes

They come at night like teenagers
to the field, howling to their assemblage,
wailing over the mountains
like the false ballistic missile alert over Hawaii when
for seven whole minutes the residents dispensed
their final messages to each other, shocking
the phone lines, running into the streets.
A great sympathetic nervous system activated all
at once, the details too fast to decode
as the end of the world hurtled in. I tell my children
they will be all right
if they just keep making things in their hands
like Josephine, without Napoleon,
growing thousands of roses at her *Malmaison*.
Some love resists erosion
for years, harder than copper, steel, or glass. But mine
wasn't like that. At seven, on another mountain,
one of my mother's new twins collapsed
in meningeal fever,
and there was no phone to call the ambulance,
no other adult she could turn to in the dark to say
The baby, something's wrong—

I know this
is not that. The relativity of misfortune
is so casual. Josephine's real name was Rose; she lived
with emus and antelopes when she couldn't have
a child. I tried so hard to stay alive
in my marriage. But every leaf withdrew; blossoms
dropped like bereft cocoons.
You never did have a green thumb, my mother said
circling my yard. Late August.
We drove down the mountain. We caught
the fever. I glimpsed the dangers
that might come to us next, scattered at first,
then everywhere.