

## ANNE CHEILEK

# After the Drought

A shift in the air—faint shuffles  
all around the house, filling the rooms  
with breathing as if a sovereign  
set of lungs prowled near

or unfettered senses, sniffing  
at the skylights, fingering the grass,  
tasting the dusty steps to my door  
with a thousand mouse tongues.

Can it be you? Padding down  
cotton-numb stairs, easing open  
the door, I hear the rustling  
that approaches from everywhere.

It is you, raindrop  
rolling in late for me, after all  
umpteens acres of dust. Yet I am  
no longer your immaculate land

—but grown greater—  
berserk with wild thorns, fat  
on dandelion gold. Softly now; mind  
where your darling foot drops; here

nettles have mined the path, and there  
my punk-head army bristles about the gate,  
crowding out your poor amaryllises  
and anemones.

See? All these succulent beauties  
bred of thirst. Tough, incurable  
rhizomes riddling my soul, waiting  
for your kiss.

Anne Cheilek is a writer, editor, and musician living in Silicon Valley. Her poems have appeared in *The Sand Hill Review*, *Daphne Magazine*, *Portside.org*, and elsewhere.

## ANDREW JACKSON

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