

## After the Deluge

ALAN SOLDOSKY

He's there in the backyard waiting  
for the sky to clear. Under the aluminum ramada,  
he slouches, yawns, as if trying to remember  
some unimportant something that, anyway, he knew  
would be forgotten. It's Thursday, nearly four.  
A few school papers have slid from his backpack  
onto the lawn. They lie amidst the unmowed  
flower heads, rain-sponged skeletons  
of thistle and buckthorn, blown-out dandelions,  
the ruins of summer. This is the world  
created for him. A brown butterfly,  
wings rusted shut, clings to the underside  
of a branch of the bare Japanese plum.  
When he tries to coax it onto his finger,  
it falls to earth with his touch,  
like a Rosicrucian hope. If he could  
invent a companion, would he still try  
out these postures of boredom? Perhaps  
he's thought there is no one who remembers  
being with him that day in the cypress grove  
where he found the monarchs clinging together  
like braids of paper in the mist  
and called everyone over to see  
what the sea breeze could not blow down.  
What discoveries of risk.  
In the dimming afternoon he watches the arc  
of clouds, wind riffling the palms,  
and touches with his fingertips a red splotch  
that has formed on the side of his chin,  
then extends his hand in front of him to test  
if the air is dry enough to go out in.

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