

# Learning to be Very Soft

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*For Mom and Dad*

## *Chest Compressions*

by the pool again one boy is pretending  
he isn't breathing / that his heart has stopped  
so his friend leans down / exhales

what he believes is life into  
the wet cave of the other's mouth  
then linking his fingers / simulates

a steady heartbeat / but not so much  
as to crack the ribs / imagines his friend  
coughing out water / the way he'd shudder

and when they are both dry / neither will  
think of the past hour as practice /  
how oddly rehearsed and familiar

until perhaps years later / in his room  
one boy will remember / how he lay  
in precise stillness / inches from

the edge of the pool / holding  
his breath / not daring to move /  
not daring to break character

## *Sister arrives after the floods*

Sister has come to stay for the week. She says the floods in her town got too bad, found their way inside her house and ruined her favourite sofa. Sister says next time she will remember to draw her curtains more tightly. She says she has never seen rain come down the way it did against her roof, that there was so much she had to leave behind: her best comb, her sharpest scissors. Sister says without her scissors, how will she ever be productive again? As soon as she arrives she heads to my kitchen and turns on the cold tap, says the water here is nothing like the riverstreet at home. She tells me to watch as the sink fills up and spills over the lip, drenching her shoes. Sister says even here the water can reach her – it always will – yet look how easy she can make it stop.