

Life on Earth
by Dorianne Laux

The odds are we never should have been born.
Not one of us. Not one in 400 trillion to be
exact. Only one among the 250 million
released in a flood of semen that glides
like a glassine limousine filled with tadpoles
of possible people, one of whom may
or may not be you, a being made of water
and blood, a creature with eyeballs and limbs
that end in fists, a you with all your particular
perfumes, the chords of your sinewy legs
singing as they form, your organs humming
and buzzing with new life, moonbeams
lighting up your brain's gray coils,
the exquisite hills of your face, the human
toy your mother longs for, your father
yearns to hold, the unmistakable you
who will take your first breath, your first
step, bang a copper pot with a wooden spoon,
trace the lichen growing on a boulder you climb
to see the wild expanse of a field, the one
whose heart will yield to the yellow forsythia
named after William Forsyth—not the American
actor with piercing blue eyes, but the Scottish
botanist who discovered the yellow bells
on a highland hillside blooming
to beat the band, zigzagging down
an unknown Scottish slope. And those
are only a few of the things
you will one day know, slowly chipping away
at your ignorance and doubt, you
who were born from ashes and will return
to ash. When you think you might be
through with this body and soul, look down
at an anthill or up at the stars, remember
your gambler chances, the bounty
of good luck you were born for.