

The tight bright hunkers of an alpine garden

mighty calico of tiny things, plain folk muslin
smocked with lichen, succulent buttons and
pin cushions of moss bell heather * purple granite
hem, the drape of blue rug juniper, dotted swiss
of waxy cones, ruffled Saxifraga cracking stone *
a quilled bodice of alpine azalea, its crowding bells
rejoicing the sweet retreat of glaciers while mistral
winds from other summits call long distance *
there is no doubt: winter is her dressing room,
she primps, adorns at every altitude *

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mother, daughter, cheerful backpacks keen
with water, lunch and extra socks pilgrim up these
crags of mountain granite to the garden * but
soon the mother's knees seize dry and stiff, wrench
each inch while forcing on and then a rogue storm
thunders in * savage wind and piercing rain and stooping
brings them no escape as still the tiny flowers hold
and watch the women toil by, harrow through
the lightning to the hut * daughter, mother huddle
in for food and heat, unguited for a height like this
and spared again, so on *