

Emily Hockaday

The Baby Reaches for the Spoils

Panic fills
the space between us
like a thick fog.
All night I awake gasping
with the ghost holding me down.
Why can't I just relax and accept that this
is my life now? I think of all the unsent emails
to my father
being held in my drafts folder. Nothing
is really important. I think that's what he'd say
if he was here. My daughter's eyes
are the shape of his mother's. I squint at her
until her features are meaningless. My thoughts
defy gravity and yet
they are heavy with dark substance. There are rules
here. How do I reach into the past
in a productive way? Whenever I do
my hands come up filled with shredded leaves,
India ink, and jumbled conversations. The baby
reaches for the spoils. One day perhaps I
can help her make sense of it.

Emily Hockaday's first full-length collection, *Naming the Ghost*, will be out with Cornerstone Press in November 2022. She is the author of the poetry chapbooks *Starting a Life*, *What We Love & Will Not Give Up*, *Ophelia: A Botanist's Guide*, and *Space on Earth*. She was the recipient of City Artist Corps and Royal Café Cultural Foundation grants for literature. You can find Emily on the web at www.emilyhockaday.com or @E_Hockaday.