

Water~Stone Review Poetry Prize

Aftermath

CHELSEA DINGMAN

The fields say *future* when they mean *failure*
after the Florida sun is done

with them. The way *failure* is a womb,
empty & frayed. What is a woman

is a wife is a mother? The soft cull
of the wind hollowing my mouth?

The salt-wounded water. Dead
squirrels & cockroaches that swell

the sewers. What can I ask for
other than a child to love

the country of my body, each
tattered lawn & Queen palm?

Is salvation the days I'm lucky enough to know
sun? Or are my failures

smaller than a season? Miscarriage
is an interesting word for what a woman

can't hold. A child. A presidency.
Clemency, when all faith is gone. I used

to pray for a daughter. Now, cruelty
is forgiveness. Field. Body. Country.

