

CONDUCT BECOMING AN OFFICER

by Nancy Claassen

I'm told dreams of being chased
represent life spent pleasing others—
unsuccessfully.

I've been chased across plains,
through canyons, around corners by armies,
lone men, snarling women, terrorists.
In my childhood red raindrops
with spears waited for me
outside church doors.
For years I escaped these dangers,
barely, breathlessly, exhausted,
hungry for restful slumber.

Yet last night I dreamt I covered
beneath a picnic table with ten small children
while bullets flew overhead.
From the farthest reaches of my mind
a disembodied voice commanded,
"Stand tall. Exhibit conduct becoming an officer."
Against all logic, I stood, trembling.
The firing ceased, the skies cleared.
The children came out from hiding.

Now, what should I make of that?