

Under my bare feet,  
brown, brittle grass  
prickles and stings.  
Bubbles of dirt  
crumble and snap.

Slowly, carefully,  
I climb the dusty hill  
like Gogo taught me—

One foot forward—  
stop.  
The other foot forward—  
stop.

I stretch out my left arm.  
My right hand  
hovers close to my head,  
ready to catch the bucket  
if it tips or slides.

Slowly, steadily,  
I climb and climb,  
careful not to move my head.  
Careful not to spill  
the smallest drop of water.

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Twice a day,  
I carry water  
from the ravine  
without spilling.

Each morning,  
I sweep the floor  
and empty  
the chamber pots.

At night,  
I pile charcoal  
to make the cooking fire.

In August, Manman  
will have her baby.

If I work hard  
and help Manman,  
maybe this time  
our baby will live.

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