

Hovering

Shannon Huffman Polson

To learn to hover you must
know how to hold the cyclic
gently

the slightest
touch
and pressure.

Learn to let your feet adjust the
pedals,
as if by thought
and just as imperceptibly.

The collective is not gripped, but just
encircled
by your nomexed fingers,
just a twitch of tension

holding our position
in the sky.

At first, a pilot new to this maneuver tries
to wrestle all controls,
thinks force is what is needed.

I did this too.

For ten long hours in the cockpit over
just as many days,
that helicopter swung side
to side

and fore and back
I thought I'd kill us and was
more and more convinced I should try
harder to control
those rotor blades,
that piece of steel

by whatever force I had.
Then understood one day at once
that force was just a tool—
and hovering meant letting go
more than I thought responsible,

and suddenly we flew, stayed stationary, rested
in the wind.

How hard it is to hover in the realm of force,
and not allow it to destroy us.

Shannon Huffman Polson is a writer and leadership speaker, trainer and coach with a MBA and MFA. In the 1990s, she served as one of the first women to fly the Apache helicopter in the United States Army. She is founder and CEO of The Grit Institute. Her poetry appears in *Emerge Journal*, *Wrath Bearing Tree*, *Sky Island Journal*, the anthology *Rumors, Secrets and Lies*, and other outlets. Polson is author of *The Grit Factor: Courage, Resilience and Leadership in the Most Male Dominated Organization in the World*, *North of Hope: A Daughter's Arctic Journey*, and the essay collection *The Way the Wild Gets Inside*. She and her family live between Washington State and the Vercors Region of France.