

THE SEA OF TOO FAR IS UNMAPPED

Maybe this is the night.

The night that can finally take the shape, though not the sound, maybe never the sound, of the story of a man who loses his knife while cleaning the goose he shot from a canoe he's been paddling for weeks, alone, far from anyone.

This man could love a woman, and this woman could be miles away, she could be dying. And in fact he does, and she is, and she is.

Tonight inside me a space without sound, or any amount of understanding, is reserved for just this.

The story is not about loss, or what fails to rise to the surface.  
It is not about last breath.

But I cannot wear red, after the small bird came and circled the time she cut his hair, circling—snip—pausing, scissors still, to remember the shape of his head, snip, the skin of his neck, snip. Red bird circling.

I will tell all of it someday—the knife, the canoe, the red bird—I can say to a lover, but I don't know. Where would I go then?

Originally appeared in *Green Mountains Review*

## WYOMING

You recognized the land, and I recognized you.  
And I recognized the shape of a silo. I recognized  
light, and you recognized shadow, and you knew  
shadows were never longer. You knew winter, and  
I thought of snow, and you thought of snow  
coming down sideways. And you knew stories, and  
I knew your voice. I knew laughing. And I looked  
for trees, and you said there were none. You said  
no water. And I disagreed and I fell asleep and you  
were driving. And I dreamed, I remember, and you  
did not remember dreaming. You were a boy, and  
you were not a boy, and you were beside me.

Originally appeared in *The Iowa Review*

## FUEL

You are so far away now, so small, that today is already long ago,  
our story in other people's hands. A man crossing a channel  
is reading the galleys, passing each page to his wife. All night  
they sit close, as if on a single bench for warmth.  
Oh, little bench. You will burn.

Originally appeared in *The Literary Review*

## REQUIEM

Across the street, two boys begin to bury  
a girl in leaves. Kneeling at her side  
they show her how to cover her face—*don't*  
*forget to breathe*, I imagine they tell her,  
when what they really should say is, *Try*  
*to remember the smell of sun through it all. It's*  
*a rare courtship*. I watch her help,  
gathering the leaves to her like love,  
hiding herself. No matter how many, it's  
the same heavy. One leaf will find its way  
beneath her shirt, another will tickle her lip.  
What she'll hear is almost like breathing,  
and it must be the leaves. Sounds beyond love,  
sounds beyond love... Remember, I would tell her,  
there are such things.

Originally appeared in *Granta* (online edition)

## SECOND SKY

The father works to make a second sky  
for his children, in case the first one  
runs out or proves false. In case its  
loveliness leaves it vulnerable, like  
a collarbone. If you go far enough  
north, just before the trees give way,  
just as the air you breathe takes on  
rough edges, you'll see him who lives  
on a mountain, who from his frozen  
dome has learned there are no secrets  
to ice. Nor are there substitutes,  
nor excuses. It is a matter of muscle  
and time, his and the ice's, before  
the second sky, a shineless, dead-colored  
compass floating in a peace of snow,  
is finished. His children have watched  
him work, not knowing how he hoped  
they were watching the ice, so they might  
know which sky was which, though  
children, he remembers, only see  
one sky. Already they spin  
and miss each other's hands,  
unaware of how their hearts align.

Originally appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*

SHOULD OUR UNDOING COME DOWN UPON US WHITE

Even while we talked, snow must have been falling. Now it's a scar:  
I've mostly failed in the rooms

of honesty and forthrightness. Let me  
explain. A child says, *Stand anywhere you want*

*right here*. I watch her sled. Orange plastic, busted,  
duct-taped in two places, it barely waits for her

before shooting the steep drive. At four,  
she is all snot, bangs, and spunk. She plods and sculpts.

After many tries, she settles into something  
the sled finds true.

Originally appeared in *Poetry*

YESTERDAY THE GIRL WITH THE SAD HALF-MOON MOUTH  
SAID THE NORTH POLE COULD BE ANYWHERE

All of January came and went and I did not go with it. I stayed here.

There's something I figured out about the dark. Because when she said the North Pole could be anywhere, I somehow understood that. And because all of January came and went and I did not go anywhere with it.

Now in the dark my sentences offer only half of themselves. I fear I taught them this.

I fear I could be anywhere too, but here is almost convincing. I have stayed very still to listen to it.

I am so still now you could almost be coming through the door, and have just laid your keys on the counter. You could almost have just tried to move something heavy, and made that one sound when it wouldn't budge.

I can't remember enough sounds, the little ones that get you from room to room.

Never is most of the sound I hear now, all around the pieces of your voice, which I try to gather about me and smooth again like a skirt. A sky to memorize. Never is such dark water, and the words little boats, the children in them scooping out the water with their buckets.

Originally appeared in *Crazyhorse*

SNOW BECOMING LIGHT BY MORNING

In case you sit across from the meteorologist tonight,  
and in case the dim light over the booth in the bar still shines  
almost planetary on your large, smooth, winter-softened  
forehead, in case all of the day—its woods and play, its fire—  
has stayed on your beard, and will stay through the slight  
drift of mouth, the slackening of even your heart's muscle—  
...well. I am filled with snow. There's nothing to do now  
but wait.

Originally appeared in *Poetry*



Today I find lowbush cranberries edging the yard. Full ripe,  
 they lie secret as gems among broken twigs and leaves blown down.  
 I pick two generous handfuls. There may be more. You told me  
 the story of Jupiter once. How when Voyager passed by one of its moons,  
 it recorded something like ten volcanic eruptions. Scientists reasoned  
 that if at random they found ten, the place must be breaking all the time.  
 They looked closer, and they were right. It is later and I'm home and I stand  
 in the dirt drive, berryless. It is dark and what's more, snowing. There is not  
 an elk here. Nothing's moving. The snow falls like it is making up  
 for months of not snowing. I don't know what it will bring back.  
 The bird I left on my steps, stunned in its bloody cap,  
 was gone when I came home. They are the small, hard,  
 cold flakes tonight. Millions. Maybe more.

Originally appeared in *Poetry*