

In the Blizzard

In the blizzard we were zombies, the few
of us still moving, still stumbling toward
the places we belonged. I figured you

for dead at first, you with your hands so cold,
your eyes so blankly frozen. Was it true,
what you murmured into my ear? You told

me how you hated the wind, how the hard,
dark months forced their fingers into the old
hurts, old wounds, how healed doesn't mean unscarred.

Living with Cold

Winter begins in July, when the days
are long but getting shorter, when the green
world rushes toward fulfillment, when the haze
of a hot afternoon no longer means
that summer is forever. We've been told
before: there's an art to living with cold.

Winter is the soul of autumn, the ghost
in October's machine — no more pretending
there's nothing to prepare, not when most
of the leaves have turned. Everything depends
on what we do now — will the woodshed hold
enough? There's an art to living with cold.

Winter begins as absence, dwindling glow
of the sun, alarming onrush of night
and everything darkness means. When the snow
comes in the hush of December, the rites
of time are rattled in with beech leaves rolled
up tight. There's an art to living with cold.

Winter is old news by February,
but winter doesn't care about our comfort,
doesn't care about our bones, and we
do well to forget, let ourselves go numb
to color, value silver over gold,
and master the art of living with cold.

Snow

What you cannot name, you cannot perceive —
so goes the claim. And then they trot out *Snow*:
Exhibit A. Eskimos, some believe,
have fourteen, or forty-three, words for snow
(estimates vary), so their wintry world
is rich with nuance; they can discuss snow
with discernment, like boys discussing girls,
whereas, enfeebled by our one word, *snow*,
our meager English tally, we're rendered blind
to snow that falls in dreams of snow, to snow
that dogs have rolled in, all the many kinds
of drifted snow, graupel, grits, popcorn snow,
Sierra cement, styro-snow, champagne
powder, pack ice, poo ice, rock ice, corn snow,
cauliflower, crud, crust, mush, frozen rain,
slippery slop. . .

We're oblivious to snow.

Our Haloes

On the day that we gave ourselves haloes
our smiles were broad, bright, blinding, and we knew
that we were right. We watched as the sun rose
to perpetual noon, and in virtue
of our peerage we raised a glass or two.

On the night that we gave up our haloes
the moonlight shone on snow like windowpanes
and we wandered lost while the heavens froze
into useless constellations — we named
them, breathed their names, remembered why we came.

In the Woods

It can happen when you walk in the woods —
not always, sometimes, and once is enough:
you see the invisible forest, the stuff
between. Sometimes the trees are buried, shouldering
last night's snow, everywhere is silent,
still. Then a soft rumble as a pine
drops its burden all at once, and a fine
white cloud thumps heavily down, and meanwhile
nothing is perturbed, silence is restored.
Again, the stillness. Or in summer, when
the woods throb and the light of the sun drives
the season's teeming madness, and the more
you look, the more you see it, unspoken,
shimmering around everything alive.