

## *Aeolian\**

I slip my skis  
into the new snow  
that swaddles a swath of bay  
in downy mounds  
round as babies' cheeks  
gentle hollows dimpling the surface.

As I glide the length of river  
the west wind roars  
scouring the snow  
with the hard truths of the Steppes  
the wild yearnings of the Pacific  
the cautious dreams of the High Plains.

Here, it scrapes clean  
ice scrimshawed with cracks.  
There, it carves a layer cake  
of concentric mountain ranges.

Turning back I see  
it has filled in my tracks  
with my hard truths, wild yearnings  
cautious dreams—  
my hard work breaking trail erased  
my way home obscured.

The wind does as it wishes  
  
as the constant erosion of time  
against my face  
fades a scar  
etches lines around my eyes, my mouth  
wears flesh down to reveal essential bone.

As it wishes.

*\*Referring to the wind's ability to shape the surface of the Earth.*

## *Trapped*

The deer died overnight  
its body a dark mound  
on a smooth skim of ice  
just dusted with snow.

Distorted, contorted  
by grey predawn light  
it looked like a rock  
newly risen in the river

or stump uprooted  
and dragged by currents  
till it snagged on the bottom  
to stay put through winter.

I imagine it easing from shore  
on twin ovaled hooves  
that pierced the thin skin.  
It would have slipped through the ice

struggled in the cold water  
feet gaining no purchase  
heart pounding in terror  
until it lay quiet

paralyzed in depths so shallow  
it could have walked upright  
broken through fragile ice  
found the safety of land.

When dark fell coyotes  
surrounded its still body  
shrieking like harpies  
in terrible delight.

I struggle against doubts  
stilled by the thin veneer  
of what I can't do  
why I must stay.

I fear the night  
with its yips and its howls  
its teeth.

## *Emblem*

At dinner he noticed  
the ring was gone how long  
he wasn't sure, didn't know  
when the familiar heft  
weight of wife and life  
left him, let him  
feel lighter.

When it slipped from his finger  
he finally was unencumbered  
unbound by obligations  
affections, the duties a home demands  
free to do as he pleased  
without heavy reminder  
of things left undone, unsaid.

I found it.  
It shone gold on the cold cement  
of the garage floor nestled in grit  
and dirt dragged in with the snow  
that clung to his truck.

I cleaned the ring  
with its worn crevices  
left it on the kitchen counter.

He put it on without comment  
as if putting a ring on his own finger  
could make a real marriage.

## *Warming*

Somewhere forests far away  
burn through the night.  
Flaming tips of Red Pine  
bend, one toward the other  
lighting the next and the next.

The dying breath of desiccated Aspen  
is a whoosh of flame, light  
and heat, gone in an instant  
ephemera whose only remnant  
is the smoke that lingers

and mingles with morning fog  
carried by the northeast winds.  
It gathers outside my door  
seeps through the cracks  
reminds me with each breath

that I cannot escape  
a world on fire.