

## A Stuffed Cat

When I was four or so  
someone gave to me  
my favorite little  
stuffed cat.

Dressed in a flowered apron skirt  
she stood upright  
on floppy legs  
mimicking you or me.

Stiff little body  
that fit  
warm and snug and tight  
in the palm of my hand.

So easy to carry, to  
shield, but also to drop,  
to soil, to mangle and rip,  
to forget.

Her face  
once a vibrant white,  
her clear blue eyes, painted lashes,  
now murky and tainted  
as the sole of a worn sock.

Looking at her now  
crushed at the bottom  
of a bag full of toys  
stashed in the corner of the attic

I think of the dream  
I once had of her  
slipping from my small sweaty fingers  
into a puddle of mud

on a rainy spring day.

## The Ides of March

Back in December  
I remember those  
first few nights, bringing  
with them numb nostrils

and aching eardrums.  
I notice these things  
tend to creep up when  
thermometers read

fourteen degrees, and  
the sun's rays begin  
to be drowned by spruce  
tops at four p.m.

The naked arms of  
birches; skeletal,  
serene. Must be for  
there's awhile to wait.

## A Painting of My Grandmother's Backyard

A set of wooden chairs and a bench,  
empty; they rest on smooth sun-dappled stones  
alone: a few maples tall and thin surround  
leaves the color of early June.

Beneath, only grass: no brown patches,  
no weeds. A wind chime hanging from a skinny branch  
frozen in time; no small hands  
eager to brush against it.

A pine tree is missing, too; dense needles  
absent. The backdrop of blue sky,  
thinking you see someone you once knew  
only to remember they're gone.