



LARS AND LOIS HOHANSON

POETRY

SNOW

Snow. The night breathes frozen water.
An enigma: The moon with its face of rock
assumes the texture of cloud. Your work
is over, and the pain, the violent blast
from the sun. You know that cold is near
waiting for its moment. Still, on a night
like this, you walk into snow, romantic
and unafraid of the dark, the unfamiliar
sound beyond shadow. Sleepwalker,
you are seeking the pale secret of winter.
Why it is that snow is soft and beautiful.
And why lost men lie down and sleep
in its long white arms. You remember
your mother's goodnight kiss.
How cool against your skin, how fragrant
on her neck, the scent she called:
essence of snow pea or snow drop.
You pictured flowers breaking through ice.

The air is moist fog a child blows back
in a dream where he becomes a snowy owl
about to feather and glide into the night
and a radiant whiteness. Glistening snow
that pours itself into tracks of mud
and blood, repaints the desperate face
of hunger. Snow that closes the door
on your dying garden, the buzzing of flies,
and the dull chant of religious sparrows:
calls forth the shy winter wren,
slate-colored junco, blue canadian jay,
and love — a white seed that drifts
in its lonely pursuit of soil, finds
your face gazing into the geometric shape
and intricate pattern of clear desire.

SUSAN WATSON

A WINTER STILLNESS

No creature stirs; the trees
Have lost their leafy sound.
Earth is at rest. The coil
Of silence is tightly wound.

No kinglets now are flitting
Along the bare hedgerow —
This is a time when stillness
Is what we need to know.

JOHN ROBERT QUINN



VETIVER

Ages passed slowly, like a load of hay,
As the flowers recited their lines
And pike stirred at the bottom of the pond.
The pen was cool to the touch.
The staircase swept upward
Through fragmented garlands, keeping the melancholy
Already distilled in letters of the alphabet.

It would be time for winter now, its spun-sugar
Palaces and also lines of care
At the mouth, pink smudges on the forehead and cheeks,
The color once known as "ashes of roses."
How many snakes and lizards shed their skins
For time to be passing on like this,
Sinking deeper in the sand as it wound toward
The conclusion. It had all been working so well, and now,
Well, it just kind of came apart in the hand,
As a change is voiced, sharp
As a fishhook in the throat, and decorative tears flowed
Past us into a basin called infinity.

There was no charge for anything, the gates
Had been left open intentionally.
Don't follow, you can have whatever it is.
And in some room someone examines his youth,
Finds it dry and hollow, porous to the touch.
O keep me with you, unless the outdoors
Embraces both of us, unites us, unless
The birdcatchers put away their twigs,
The fishermen haul in their sleek empty nets,
And others become part of the immense crowd
Around this bonfire, a situation
That has come to mean us to us, and the crying
In the leaves is saved, the last silver drops.

JOHN ASHBERY

STILL LIFE OF A WINTER EVENING

Note the room, framed in firelight
And shadow. The brick hearth,
White cloth rug, two comfortable cups
For holding tea. Do not overlook
The books, one thick, one worn and thin,
Placed casually as if about to be
Opened in the middle where
A tired eye left off. Observe
The lamp, a dim golden glow
Seeping through the silk shade
Into a yellow pool around the chair.
Do not neglect the quiet rattle
Of windows battling wind, the hiss and
Chatter of the fire. Dull pewter
Mugging and plating its way across
The mantel, brass andirons brazening
It out below. Sniff the cedar scent,
Study the pictures in the pulsing coals.
Sit beside me, touch my hand, smile:
Forever we have been caught intact
Gazing happily from this poem.

ANNE L. DAVIDSON

HENNESSEY, DOUCHE AND MCGEE FUNERAL DIRECTORS

In front of Hennessey, Douche and McGee
the sign read no parking.
They were a ratty outfit,
put corpses in baby carriages.
And then a man clad only in a diaper
played on a trumpet,
"Blues for Mr. Charlie,"
as Judgement Day supposedly rolled in
like a wooden nickle
or the wrecker's ball knocking down the Oriental Theater.

WALT CURTIS