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Three Poems

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NIGHTS OF FLINT AND SNOW

fill with your long absence, the wind not bitter, ice, an age to come. When sky lets go it is warm work digging you out, headlight cold in the socket, one branch of the cedar down.

The compost path steepens on both sides of the summer-house. I think of old mines reopened: veins of chard, sad pods in coal-dark seams, the golden load unfolding in the buried ear. I ride the waves, green, to the sea warm rain.

Weathered beets. The seal-faced kelp torn from its rank salt bed and the puckered kiss of anemone.

Water turns us back, road and river curving under ice to the deepening source. Home. Inside your place is warm plum and apple slowly turning wine.

THE SHELL

My sealed house winters in its triple shell—storm-windowed, weather-stripped and double-locked. I knock icicles from the low eaves and watch the cold come back cold air condensing under doors. Sculptured carpet snow below the cocomat. Once I wanted that blood too thick and hot for comfort, all breath closer than my own. Ice forms again on the lintel, hardens against the screen.

In your light sleep I pull back the drapes, let the cold light down, leave the flue open. Animal signs of a long siege. Later the barometer falls. Wind hollows a track through the chimney. Casings crack as they swell. The house settles into the frozen ground.

THE WOMAN WHO THOUGHT

her head was a teapot brewed and brooding on the leaves of fortune thinly floating over pale green waters, shattered ritual teacups.

A wave of panic strewed the grey shelves' matter under the lavender hat arranged like a cosy flat with bric-a-brac inside the breakfront cabinet.

Past middle age steeped in delicate Limoges she took to reading palms and palmistry—those brave infusions bubbled over scones. If laughter rippled back—

some weekend guest—
she heard the black leaves
steam to harbor
what the morning mist, the ghostly pilings
covered
and the woman thought.