

March Morning Walks

by Mary E. O'Dell

1

Hard to believe the shear of this wind
makes way for petaling things
and the small, paper shells of robin

and wren.

Hard to believe
as we watch the dog, ruff blown backward

pick her stiff-legged way
through white, brittle grass
to lap from the ice-rimmed pond.

This wind wants to eat you.
It rises up in great exhales
that shiver our bones in their sacks.

Reaching the lee of the hill
we find dregs of a campfire
its embers too feeble to thaw our numb hands

until slowly the wind's bearing shifts.
The dog comes to curl near the coals
as they hiss and glow

until tiny, bright tongues reach wildly upward
and fingers and toes begin to sting and burn
with the pain of coming alive.

2

Snow showers last night—the blindness and howl
like driving up Charlottie's mountain.

This morning, the air softly chill, a tempered wind.
Snow tatters on grass like feathers of a slain bird

water in pools so dark and clear, the dog's lapping long
luxurious, drawing up sweetness within me.

White sky thick as a comforter over us all—
me in my two-legged stroll

the tranquil dog
the dead bird that is not a bird.

Over our heads, a crow, its route a mirror of our own
calls on the fly, anxious and lonely

black feathers ruffled. From a nearby roof
it blares again and again and beats its wings.

Up there, the wind still slices and churns
It buffets whatever prayers are rising.

3

After last night's blizzard
snow pillows the grass, the shrubs and trees.
If it weren't for the asphalt's wet shine
it could well be January.

Oblivious or optimistic,
rosy finches vie for black thistle at the feeders.
Farther on, ice-rimed water. The dog laps once
And stares up, confused.

Later, stepping onto a glistening puddle,
she starts in alarm, then skitters across to safety.
I laugh aloud.
My frosty breath breaks open the still, blue day.