

# Walking

by Diane Wakoski

*“Music’s a wood you walk through.”*  
—*Black Swan Green*, David Mitchell

White scarf, woolen, Sarah’s gift from Argentina  
 where she learned to tango, is around  
 my neck,  
 and I am walking on Tolstoy’s estate, more  
 than a hundred years ago,  
 a girl with feet  
 as small as cornets or bugles, shaped  
 like ermine, or lab mice,  
 nicely shaped,  
 those feet. But it’s the white wool, a harness  
 of bells, a knitted gliding step  
 into passion  
 that fills the woods. Russian novels, Rachmaninoff  
 concertos, cheeks that are pomegranate  
 red: these are conjured  
 by the branches, stripped for winter, the way they will  
 crackle as kindling when starting a fire behind  
 the grate where  
 my foot will rest as I scrape the rime off  
 my walking boots and unlace them.  
 When I enter the  
 drawing room stocking-footed, the Diamond Dog will be  
 lying  
 on the hearth. Maybe this is a  
 story by Chekhov, not a Tolstoy novel,  
 though what I  
 am really hearing is music and no path through it.  
 The witch’s house is not far, I am  
 told, but why  
 should I want to go to a fairy tale? It’s the cup of smoky  
 Russian Caravan tea that I’m hoping  
 for, and someone,  
 not imaginary, to drink it with.