

Thousand Springs

Mark Sheffield Brown

It snowed yesterday for a moment
but it was an idea
that didn't catch on —

whiteness,
a blanket for our sins —

not for us,
I'm afraid.

Those blank clouds stood
back today though
and ringed
the city,

and the sun came out
to talk with car hoods
and window glass.

It's almost evening now
and there is just a gold line
between two gray sheets
in the west—

that space between two bodies
not truly together.

Even the lowest things cast a shadow
 at this hour
and sun has blood in its light;
embers crawl over
 everything,
and trees electrify
 into momentary torches.

I stare west
 at that gold stitch,
 and hope the clouds don't shift
 too soon.

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In the direction of that light
 is Thousand Springs,
 its various waters.

Like chandeliers, like teeth, like gutters, like wells,
 they appear
 straight from unlikely rock.

Under yesterday's snow,
 the canyon was a field
 of dark eyes and mouths,
 black, braided ropes
 running down walls,

uncovered, untouched.

The stones wore mantillas,
fall gardens became
white hives,

but the water kept coming
up, black and cold.

It is this steadiness that I love,
this blackness.

I love darkness's refusal
to be covered,
its simple persistence, how we can sometimes
make a comfortable bed
in its chilly teeth

Even in snow,
even under light,

we are a mapped canyon:
dark spots amid the white.

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The sun shorts out,
fire in the trees turns dull,

disappears.

Clouds move in,
and night comes
to lay blankets across fields,
to fill streets
and hide
the space between bridges
and the water below.

North of us,
the Lost River bows its head
under the sand,

works its way
ten feet at a time
east.

That water emerges
in a thousand ways.
comes up
beautiful and black
to mingle with white snow
and light.