

## Soft

*Kevin Klein*

A drive for its own sake  
five o'clock on a lazy New Year's Day,  
our kids, aged two and one, coming down  
from the cocktail of cousins and sugar.

Car-seat straps sink into puffy coats.  
Babble and rattling blend  
with our parental murmurs,  
the heater's whir with hum  
of road and engine. Warmth  
old as the birth of stars,  
as old as breath, melts  
the crystals of window-frost.

The glow of afternoon fading into dark,  
a peace as tenuous as a little kid's nap.  
The world comes unwrapped  
in a tin box. Nothing here is new,  
nothing new is needed. It's dangerous  
this day and age to feel so complete.

The kids might remember  
if the womb was any better,  
but there's no use asking.  
As we slow for a stop sign I turn  
to see their sleep-closed faces  
in streetlights that glide over them  
quiet as snowflakes.

I whisper to my wife, who nods. The silence  
becomes our silence. With it we stir  
this softness like swizzle sticks  
through hot-chocolate froth  
that will close over  
in its own gentle time.