

A CAPPELLA

You hurry back up the stairs or you'll make them late.
I'll hold your coat. Don't forget gloves. Cold burns deeper
than skin, and makes us cry in the night. Wrap this scarf
around your neck and cheeks. Don't run. You'll slip. The rug
slides on the wooden floor. A good many faded
rugs have been caught on that nail on the bottom of
the door, its wood warped, opened once to admit a
stranger who fogged the windows, changed all the bedrooms,
made our life go awry. Your gloves are hiding? I
know: you're too grown for such things you're no baby. But
daddy grows tired of waiting and blasts the horn.
Your best friend lost something in the snow, your favorite
in the whole-entire-world-around. Button up
tight. Wear my mittens. At least put your hands in your
pockets. It couldn't be found: the sky was getting
dark and I was calling, calling, *Dinner!* The house
is getting bigger, your toys disappearing, your
playmates becoming unreliable. Daddy
leans on the horn until you burst out the door, new
scarf dragging in the dirty snow. I lean against
the closed door, wince at the cold rushing under it,
kick the faded rug back in its place. The echoes

wander aimlessly until they find me in the
kitchen: they gaze mournfully from the corners as

I reheat last night's dinner. I chew slowly, stare
at the clock's hands, go to bed early. Nightmares woke

you again last night. I untangled you from the
blankets, dried your cheeks, tightened you in my arms so

you might hear the rhythm of my heart. Lost once in
snow. Found glittering with ice. But not by children.

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