

A Winter Poem

— 1 —

A father,
 hands cold,
is leading his two children
over the ice:
 a little girl,
maybe three,
she's wearing
 a blue coat
stretching past her knees
where it meets
 red rubber boots
 shiny with slush
and melting snow.
 Her mittens match the boots.

Her little brother holds her hand
 and
wears a blue coat
 of his own
though shorter
with yellow mittens
 and green boots
 beneath
red pants.
 He's two.

Their father is nameless,
 has no face.
He's come to drown
 each
beneath the ice:

his pick
hits
the ice
cracking it.
The broken pieces,
tossed to the side.

He stares at the little girl
thinking
that she has her mother's
nose and
the yellow curls of his own
mother.
He looks at her lips,
perfect,
but can't
quite bring
himself
to her eyes.
She asks if they can go.

Her little brother
stands
back now off
kicking the ice
amazed as
his
little boots send it spinning
and rolling into the distance
laughs
at the click
as it hits his father's shoe
before falling in.

— 2 —

At home
there is the idea
of a woman lying
dead
on the kitchen floor.
She's blond
and has the nose of the daughter
she'd promised
to take away
from her
husband
-their father,

who is still
standing on the ice
though now looking
in his daughter's
eyes,
thinking
—she is perfect.

— 3 —

The children
slowly
begin to notice the cold,
the snow
gathering
on their sleeves.
Their father
notices
the way it melts,
rolls down,

soaks
in
before reaching the end.

He asks
the little girl
“do you love me?”
Turning
back
from the snow
She nods,
smiling.

— 4 —

At home
there is the idea
of their mother lying dead,
but here
the ice is
cold—
he knows
the water
is even worse.

The little girl
tugs
again
at his sleeve
asking
“can we go?”
He nods
just . . .
lifts her.

— 5 —

At the door their
 mother
 is furious
and threatens again
 to move to Georgia
 with the kids—
her kids
 if he doesn't get them back on time,
 next time.
He nods,
 but the anger
 isn't there.



photo submitted by Rachael Johnson