

Michael McDowell

Ice Storm Paralyzes City

Poets hope for extremes in weather—
It's part of the job.
Sure, sure, antennae of the race,
Speaking the eternal verities,
Poets yearn for spring,

But spring comes too soon and too easily.
Daffodils now in February,
And Portland still hasn't had a big snow,
A big freeze and silver thaw.
We haven't yet known we're alive

By seeing the world's heart stop:
The crack and whoosh of a fallen branch
Too loaded with ice to hold,
The rifle shot cry of wood too cold
To stay silent—

We hope for the brittle hard world of legendary winter
To stop commerce and the quotidian
And in the deathly tranquil city to tell us:
Look at your breath: You, are, alive.
Look at how little you need to survive.

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Coastal Saturday Night

Twilit Long Beach from Pro Video to Seaview,
Weekend tourists have multiplied on the sidewalks.
Swollen minivans and RVs drop litters of
Kids and sweatshirted spouses on sidestreets.

We await your arrival from the city.
Dinner's put away and dishes washed,
The fireplace snaps and cracks the fallen pine
And new "Welcome!" cards sit on the table.

Without you, our meals have missed their seasoning.
Our beach walks have missed your hands,
And the bed is just a bed,
The night just the darkness until morning.

With you here the anemones and starfish return to the tide pools,
The ocean again booms and roars in the distance, as it should,
The coastal tidelands envelope us with their scents, and
The moon rises full through shore pines and spruce.