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Selections from *Overwinter*

March 2015 | The University of Alaska Press

“We Were Explorers Once”

Ice breaks up each spring—
the ocean and rivers grow teeth

and lose them, place them
under pillows of fog

lose them to drifts of warmth
in the coldest, killingest depths

where small, edible whales
move like clots through a bloodstream,

where their shadows in the shallow seas
are vaguely alive, and vaguely something else,

the shape of old ships, the footprints of old explorers
tramping crabwise through some imagination.

To what end did we venture
out of the old world

to the endcaps of earth,
shelterless, wearing comely myths

we couldn't dream would become truths
up at the globe's neckline?

If our wants are trivial
our best wars are tussles,

our worst weather is rime on road signs,
breath off the water in the morning.

“A Brief History of Landing Here”

All the phone calls clotted a hum in my inner ear.
And every walk became a thick pencil underlining the same

three newspaper sentences until the paper shredded.
Every vine-ripened song throbbed

into airspace toward fighters looking for you
decksides on your friendly aircraft carrier.

How enticing, the glance you flung
like a neighbor tossing a pail of water onto a house fire.

Signal the birds in then jump.
Twirl your orange sticks like sparklers or hurl them.

How enticing, your good harmonizing,
your tambourine jangling in the back of your rickety pickup—

turn off your turn signal and sing,
something like the note you left on the table,

take the alley home and park cockeyed on the yard
and know this: I am inside pitting your feral cherries.

I am forwarding each piece of your mail.

“Here We Are”

I listen to every voice I left to be here
repeating the last little words I heard.
I am a pathway out of them.
Why won't they write.
When was the last talk.
I am back in my body, nearly,
I am on the way here by a new magnetism
reminiscent of early, pre-industrial
gravity and cloud shadow,
pastoral landscapes uncanonized by oil.
We paint ourselves with silt mud
without decorum or devotion.
This fallout is a residue of sweat
and our curtains were torn down
and soaked in paint thinner.
We flip the calendar,
enamored with rain on the cabin window.
We may or may not be in this together.
We may or may not remember this tomorrow,
though the story will pass on and on and on.

“After This Life”

The lisp of seasons we scarcely left
chime another morning haphazardly to light—
time to find myself in the woods, by the creek,
idealess, comfortless.
All lines line up or lift their sullen voices like winds.
If we could limit our house voice to mere thought
and sense all thoughts, if we could eat
or write our subarctic lives
without ever sounding churlish or devised—
I imagine first the changing leaves of trees
the morphing light of sunset striking slopes
where eager men careen up some false alpine
and nonplussed animals give up the idea of warmth.
You thought my life was lifted up by smoke.
We thought our lives could adopt elegant repetition.
And should you stay honest
between the first and last
of our thousand wedding days
I will hold a match before my mouth
and smoke the words *I do*.