

PORTRAIT OF A WOLF IN WINTER

Mac Allen

Cold gnaws but not like hunger
teeth against frigid bone, ribs tight against skin
these are the starving months
hunger driving desperation driving death
last bastion of the days of plenty
she stands at the border of forest and plain
snow capped spruce and frigid grass
certain death ahead and behind
she might starve well before spring rains

These are the starving months
and she waits, belly empty
for hope in the shape of a herd
one or two wounded lagging behind she
and they robbed of wills and ways the snow
against her teeth whets her appetite the sun
lights fire to snowy fields as it sets too
hungry to sleep too hungry to hunt she steps
from the cover of trees

Spring will come when it pleases
bare tree branches bursting with buds
snow fields turned to fields of muck
it will come as it always does
in a raging storm and gentle breeze
the wolf will remain in the cover of this same tree
heralding its return, last bastion of starving months
somehow surviving another year, joy of life ahead
and the flowers will smell an almost sickly sweet

