

Erica Funkhouser

December, New England

For the moment the earth's sorrows sleep
below this snow, and joy travels over it
like sunlight over mica, stopping
and entering us at once.
There are no borders or contention.
The rub of ice against water, boulder against bulb,
every impediment from weeds to precedent has vanished.

In other words, history. We've none of that today.
It's as if no nuclear submarine were being launched
right now in Mystic, Connecticut
beneath a parade of admirals, as if
in New Hampshire workmen from the long-closed
handkerchief factory were not assembling
a grandiose temple to plutonium, their only work in years.

We stand in the interior of a telescope,
a glass channel joining time and space.
This is a world only dreamed of, all its perfections
absences, Utopia: crystalline and temporary
as those moments when a dream's so solid
we step on it and don't fall through.

Suddenly I remember the woman in the market
who was a child in this house, knew the four rooms
when they were layered with pages of farmer's almanac.
She stopped the cash register once to say
she still hears the wind howling through her sleep
as if through that black trumpet on page nine.

Today there are three of us—my son, my husband, myself.
We walk out on the perfect snow as if each crystal
were a maze we've always known the way out of
and all the mazes formed a bridge
to let us travel free of geography and doubt.

Only our son speaks, who has just learned how to question:
"Where are all my countries? Here they is."

He leans over the brilliant snow almost moving
beneath him and presses his hands into the deep,
receptive white to leave an archipelago of holes.