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Magic Dead of Winter

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For Petr Hruška

Short days of a long winter, the sun blinds you
worse than in midsummer. On the white snow, dotted
with raccoon pawprints, falls the dark shadow of a pine
trodden down by my ski tracks from yesterday.
Nearby, footprints of a deer—lively traffic—if you can see it.
This is no desert, as disparaging city folks claim,
it's nature filled with beasts and stars. Lovely prairie,
sometimes so brightly moonlit that I — riding
my exercise bike into the West, or traveling in dreams—
can see everything vividly.

And while the winter casts your very life into question, words
are unquestionable, they burst out like a school of fish that hibernated
sunken in deep mud. And you're surprised at them, like seeing a blade of grass
sprouting from concrete, only seeming to come out of nothing. When hard times
last long, you draw into a poem like a warm wintertime sleep and
cover up with a heavy blanket of snow.
Curling up and shutting your eyes you cut your needs
down to a minimum, you're not wasting time, but conserving energy.
And now and then you munch on some verses, just enough
so that you're not drinking on an empty stomach.

Translated by Wayles Browne

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