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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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