

DEBORAH BANKS  
**WINTER ICE**

I come around the bend  
and there, on First Lake  
where the ice has been  
laid bare with shovelling,  
David and his young daughter  
are playing hockey.

The sun is setting soon,  
just now it is backwashing  
the upper hills in light—  
a light that warms the fir trees,  
that illuminates the rocks of the cliff face,  
that remarks on the white hocks of the deer  
turning in to the forest,  
ringing other bells  
in the fire of my breast.

I am confused by this love  
of small things.  
It is so uncomplicated  
that I complicate it with thought,  
when really, it is the moment  
that loves me loving life,  
the tenderness hurting my chest  
in the best aching ways.

Meanwhile, I am already miles away  
and David is sliding a puck  
across the lake ice  
to his little girl.

I want this thought, this grace  
with all that is best in me,  
the air going in and out of my lungs  
their lungs,  
oh all lungs bursting forth,  
from the luscious trees  
to the deer in the woods  
each quiet stealthy life,  
the damn beautiful ache of it all.

## SOLITUDE IN A PANDEMIC

You think you are empty,  
that there are no more words to be spoken  
that the sky knows all of the answers anyway,  
and that everything leaves  
and the new comes unbidden.

Then you step out onto the porch  
with the binoculars  
to look up at the full moon  
landscaped with dark continents,  
the vaguest stars ringing it  
and everything is distilled.

And when you think that the beaker of ache  
cannot hold more beauty,  
when your glasses are off  
the door is closed again  
you are brushing your teeth  
and letting the stillness of the house settle  
then you hear something  
and something again in reply:  
owls in the night conversing  
wooing across the hills,  
and you are released from all worry in that moment.

Even the little moth at the foot of the bed  
resting its wings  
is waiting for you,  
brimming with approbation  
to sing this song into being  
to write about this perfect love.