

ZACHARIAH WELLS

FOOL'S ERRAND

My mother sent me into the swirling
bowl of stirred-up curdled milk
our valley was, wild with wind and skirling
snow that fastened onto lashes, there to melt
and bead and break mute light, unfurling
bows like multicoloured scraps of silk.

Bring them in, she said, they'll freeze to death
out there. Out there then I went,
tripping through the hip-high snow, each breath
a wet rag gasp, as weaving wind sent
shuttling snow between my teeth and hooked a snowdrop wreath
around my neck. When I found them, he was bent

over her back, his forepaws clutched her rump.
I tried hard to pull him out of her,
but still he blindly pumped and pumped,
eyes shut against the storm that heaped snow in his fur.
I hauled off and handed him one solid thump
which only shook his haunches bare.

I stumbled home and left them there.