

Scott Weaver

The Power Goes Out After the Blizzard of 1981

The television's static hum
hangs in front of its suddenly dead screen

as the furnace fan spins itself to a stop, exhausted
dervish from another night of whirling.

Good Northerner,
my mother knows the cold is forever
probing houses, seeking
uncertain doors, warped boards, thin windows, entry.

As she sloughs through
two feet of new snow
does she think about my father

tucked behind his desk and triple lines of razor wire,
warmed by the prison's safety generator?

He's clumsy with an axe, too much force,
too much fury. Too much exactness and anxiety of certainty,
his rage encasing all it finds in its cold silence.

So she must trample this new world's white crust herself
to the woodpile, axe awobble against her shoulder
while her children sit fat in winter coats
as the last of the heat thins and thins.

First crack—one half inch

of ice over the woodpile fissures, spidering out from the center.
Her second swing is strong enough to loose a log.

Too wet and whole to burn,
it must be turned into tinder, severed
from itself over and over

and arias of warm breath cloud around her head
as the blade rings off the oak's frozen top.

Each time she lifts
her arms in harmony above her hooded head,
axe at its apex, before the fall,

the thin moment of stillness
before its momentum is born
from the absence of her strength,

is it my father she sees
or her own, the man who taught her
not to fight it, to make the axe's weight
work for you?

Who seeps into her imagination
after every swing—the man who is or was?

There must be something more
than this silence, this whiteness, the cipher of her own breath
made blank by bright wool scarf, a thing

that comes after absence, perhaps
a blast of song from between the log's two halves
gaping apart like the sides of ribcage
hanging broken above a silent heart,
a trapped moan of melody
lifted into the wind and gone as quick.

I put these men in her head as comfort,
they're all I know of her now. I brace myself

after each breath, when

the emptiness of her axe begins

to turn its weight from burden to work

and she comes blasting in like a blizzard gust,

grief we cannot break,

always searching, always finding

absence, cracks, entry—no matter how small.

Scott Weaver lives in Austin with his wife Kelli, daughter Cypress, and dog Sylvia. You can find him on the web at scottweaver.posterous.com and on Twitter @scottweaver.