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Some Winters the Wolves Return

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SOME WINTERS THE WOLVES RETURN

When the pack comes down from the high country
I hear blood stammering in my veins.
I feel the ice melting in forgotten rivers.
They come back to us because we need them.

It is too easy now to think we have gotten away
from our four limbs reaching for common ground,
too easy to ignore the furred board of a dog's body
thumping against firewood in the back of a pickup.

Planting their gray bodies with steel seeds
we protect our few frightened animals
from their hunger and ourselves
from our own dark needs.

Still, there are times I come upon them alone
and the circling hunger moves in a single animal.
Standing deep in my human tracks I take aim and fire,
falling in the snow as the bullet enters.

The sudden lack of motion the body stumbles into
leaves a silence at the end of the path
and a part of me moves out from the change
turning four-footed to the hills in search of family.