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Harvest Letter

John December

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Harvest Letter

This morning, crusted frost
sequined the grass. Now it has faded
and dried. The October sun scatters
tons of sunlight (if sunlight could be measured)
across the front porch.

I'm trying to tell you
about the calves, which, after eating,
wandered into the back field,
and became engulfed in wheat.
This is the harvest season. Combines come
through, chopping. The calves were short.
Andrew, driving, did not see them.

Animals die
so cheaply on farms. I come into the farmhouse
and prepare chicken or lamb; and even Lucy, the old cat,
gave birth to dead kittens, little wrappings
of twisted flesh and sinew.

I'm thinking
of the summer you were here, with all the cousins,
and we climbed the only tree along the west side
of the back field. The wheat was shallow,
and jumping and falling like apples from the branches,
we were bruised and sore.

You jumped the furthest,
arching into the wind. Landing, yelling up
that you could catch us all, you spread your arms
wide. We jumped cautiously,
and as each of us hit ground, you ran to us, laughing,
holding the ground still.

Now you
are in another world. The harvest comes.
I watch the thin vein of the river pour
out past the end of the horizon and wonder:
what is it, on the other end, that pulls us in?

John December