

Winter 1992

Things Moving

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Things Moving

She knows these fields, cut from old family lines,
how the earth breaks its promise,
clots wet-frozen along the furrowed throats,
how the stubble tries.

The silo monument is half-empty.
Coffee calls her husband to the winter town,
whiskey keeps him there past supper.
The children have been marketed in the city—
only March, whining in the drying crib.

In the morning she watches
for winter crows, for things moving.
She gave up quilting, buys her bread at the store—
the hands tire of putting up hours.
When the afternoon pales,
she lights the lamps and stove,
sets the table for quiet.

Light smokes from the lamps.
Above the ticking fields,
above the blackened ribs of the grove,
the moon yellows and falls away, dried skin.
In the evening window she rocks,

turns the darkness over in her lap.
In Iowa there are islands
where winters are sharper than memory.