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Reunion on the Northfork

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Reunion on the Northfork

This November winter pansies make as much sense
as a car that runs. A wall of leafless blackberries covers
a field and hides pheasant. In Fristad's neglected orchard,
windfall apples spoil three black bear. A dying wife
smokes knowing the smoke won't kill her. Four men walk
the dry path of Racehorse Creek to the Nooksack's bank.
They kick rocks in a fall so dry salmon carve angels in stone.
No answers rise from barren beds and the spawn red creeks
they recall. One man uses fish as his hook to force words
where no one wants to go. Another man feels the cold
minestrone at Graham's is his fault. No one blames the girl
who looks like the man in the kitchen. She deftly ladles
and chats. McGahern says 'She was as far from ugly
as she was from beauty,' and they smile as she praises them
for bussing their dishes. Four men pack into the small car.
They drive Road 37 past the snowline. They set foot in winter
and return like the boys who teased the dog, boys
who no longer believe they have escaped for good,
for good is measured differently, like beauty, apples and smoke.