Darker

Laurie Cosca
The dog has run away again. 
Her day off she drives through 
Fairbanks snow-covered streets 
calling him, to come home quiet, 
eyes animal-like with his loss.

After dinner her husband heats water 
for the dishes, saves some for her hair. 
She leans into the deep bucket as he pours 
water over her head, holds her small waist 
while she towel dries her hair.

The dog is not waiting for her 
but the woman knows where he would have lain, 
and how her hand would have passed 
over the stiff-furred head. She creates 
a curve of warmth in the bed.

Her husband does what has become 
habit: smoking after dinner, 
pulling her to him the way he drags wood 
every morning. She wants to tell him 
that strength is not everything.

She stares at his boots and her shoes 
near the door, as if parts of them 
are always leaving places. He sleeps. 
The room is too dark for her. Alaska is darker 
than any place on earth.