“Hearing”

His pulse beats him like a broom, the man sitting in the circle of blood, red wicking through the white snow. He has one eye closed, the other spread into his palm. The chainsaw chokes, stalls still and jagged woods glinting ice like teeth. Dark grows between the trees. In the silence he hears the snow first crack, the rustle like suds in his baby daughter's hair, her fat legs straight in the kitchen sink her feet pointed, stiff as fish before he pours a cupful of water over her silky skull. Steam lifts from the snow in curling feathers that float from his body. The circle of blood deepens. He wants to buy his daughter a horse. He sees its muscled chest flicking as it canters on the path under the power lines. She is making talk by the shift of hips, rubbing heels, her fingers loose on his bridle over a rippling jaw, her fingers soothe the long tube of his ear. Her whispers trickle in.

© 2001 Connie Voisine from Cathedral of the North