

Letter from Deep in January

by Iggy Shuler

You turned to me like an opening door,
Painted green in the treelight.

And pushed a finger through my hair,
And said, very gently, goodbye. Know

You are my every lovely thing: my lilac
Drifter, delicate spoonwear,

The blossom scent of spring in
Our magnolia kingdom. Pill bugs.

Red clay. Black dirt. Harvestmen.
Needles blanketing the paths. What

Did the pines tell me? Only
The same things my father did:

If you want the fish to tug on your line,
You gotta hold your mouth right.

And, the devil is real, the devil took my
wife, and the devil is beating his wife:

that's rain for you, baby. It knows how
To make a halo out of a broken countryside.

The cornfields shone like gold in the
Warm autumn when my mother left.

It's raining on every reckoning day
Here in big sky country, where there

Are no dogwoods or muscadines. My
Daddy was a good mean man. My days

Are big and empty. It's snowing. It's
Springtime. It's possible for two things

To be true at once. It's all bleaker than
They promised it would be:

The Irish neighbors' strobe lights
Burn streaks into my eyes, like

Whiplashes. The trees are silent
As ghost people. They don't speak.

They don't even watch. On my
Drive home, I scream and scream

In the private cab of my truck. I've
Read your letter. Please send more:

It's mighty lonesome out here, and
My hands are calloused. Everything hurts,

Even the bones in my feet.
Even my *bones*.

What's so terrifying? The longness of life,
The size of the sky. The workday, its end.

The churning seasons, the turning world.
These stupid hills like still bodies blanketed

In snow. There are no bugs. They sleep in
The winter, or they die.

Please, send the smell of something soft from
The green mountains. The golden grasses terrify

Me. Brisk. Burdened. Snowfallen. Words taste
Like spit in my mouth. I wake up sometimes and

Feel that I am dying, or drowning.
Not dying,
But drowning.