

THE MISCARRIAGE: HER DREAM

Robert Crum

Tonight the air is milky with the windborne snow.
Though the sky is heavy with stars and the moon
is shining without its usual mercies, this field
where I have come to know what I have lost
is thinning whitely away around me.

And now, from the darkening woods, she comes, the girl,
betraying with silence all I intended for her. Her head
is lowered. She is up to her knees in snow. And her arms,
it seems, are bent in prayer, though I know in her hands
she is holding a little water, as much as could quench a flame.

Of course I am asleep. Otherwise I could not bear
her coldness. And so far I have borne it well. I dream
my sleep is this field where I am walking now,
in my wrong body, the absent distance into a life
that has no life outside of my desire for it.

We are so close I can see she is wearing
the dress my mother wore the night before she died,
the one with blue flowers on brown silk, a gold clasp
above the breasts. And still she comes, careful not to spill
the water. And I am likewise drawn, until we stand face

to face, ages away from each other. And though she has
my husband's hair, and though she is looking at me
through my own eyes, there is no language we can share,
there is nothing either of us can say. The snow
keeps rising on the wind. Her hair sweeps over her eyes.

The flowers all down the body of the flower-print dress—
each one a soft spot, each one outlined in red—close.
And the girl steps back into the snow, holding out
the hands that I can never warm, holding there,
the dark reflection of my waking face in ice.