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To Jeannie, on Losing the Farm: 1929

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To Jeannie, On Losing the Farm: 1929 .
Mary Jane White

I want to tell you a story you will remember.

You remember I stood there, stamping on the cattleguard
and decided I would go back and do it and then just took
his collar off and left it at the end of the chain

and put him in a basket, I had to, to carry him

over his own prints that morning in the access road,
clear and starry where he set his feet that each
could have been like the end of a stick, frozen

in a stream, with the snow drifted against them.
But he got himself home.

And I carried him out past the mottled sow, her back
arched, bristly, teats wedged nipple to nipple
like the near side of an accordian, taking a pee

in a circle of sows jostling to get to stick a nose in.
They all stopped eating snow to do this.

Then I went out with him into the fields of pheasants
and buried rabbits, in each field a different stubble,
corn, beans, hay. I had an eye for that and for colors

and for cats jumping along in the deep snow, for a wet patch

of firs and black-limbed oaks and lindens beside a house.
I saw deer moving up from the stripped fields
into the timber, saw the rack he and I had in mind

to get like the hat you have been wanting
all season to peer out from through church
over a pair of white gloves folded with your hands.

Jeannie, there is no saving it now, nor our plans, nor any hat,
nor dark plumage soft as a new antler, nor my cheek
that was a streak of colors in the sun, that was

many colors on the snow, one of them red!

She planned it, Daumeller, the old bitch, feeding him
something with ground glass whenever he got loose on me.
And then I put leaves over his eyes

before I shot him. And then I shot him.
And then he was like a scrap of fur, my dog, like a dead owl.

Now many things will be like that, Jeannie,
and perhaps I

will be like that.