

2011

# You Aren't Sure & I May Not

Emily Van Kley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Van Kley, Emily. "You Aren't Sure & I May Not." *The Iowa Review* 41.3 (2011): 47-49. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.7072>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

EMILY VAN KLEY

YOU AREN'T SURE & I MAY NOT

You aren't sure & I may not  
be made of the right kind  
of mortar, but how else  
to answer the ice  
axe of memory, the urge—  
part mechanism part  
scarsong—which says return  
is instinct & instinct  
is absolution & absolution  
is all we know of quench.  
We go. All praise to  
your iron smile & hips  
solemn as a staircase,  
your anointed fingers,  
the complicity of denim  
& windows white  
with hometown frost.  
Praise the place where  
I could not have met you.  
Praise the tiny city down  
twelve miles of ice-rutted  
highway, all I knew of  
cosmopolitan, its several  
thousand inhabitants, stone  
courthouse scrimmed  
in copper, square-jawed  
houses on streets named  
*Magnetic*, everything  
built when the mines  
seemed eternal &  
earth was another word  
for come right in. Before

47

the blast that siphoned  
an underground river  
into the Barnes-Hecker,  
filling the throats  
of 51, ripping  
at the boots of the sole  
survivor who terrored up  
800 feet of ladder to  
the one bright scratch  
of sky. Before the new  
mines, sliced open like boils,  
those too containers for  
ache. & when we arrive  
if the people are insular,  
if they are hard as the jeweled  
snout of a northern pike, if winter  
is a shut vault with the lock  
cycling & we never  
learn to hunt deer or any  
more minor creature—  
does it mean we wouldn't  
flourish? Couldn't we find  
a house with cut-glass  
windows & let it go to ruin,  
tear up the lawn for garden,  
watch our collard greens palm  
the sun? At night, wouldn't  
I close my mouth around  
your knuckles, taste broccoli  
flowers & the sand which drifts  
everything, the frozefish tang  
of Superior mawing the harbor  
five blocks down? October

fold us into the creed-cold  
winter, snowstorms  
like the shed blood of nations.  
Sundays spend in the pews  
with the fierce & lowly.  
Nights slake & burn.