A Walk

Keith Taylor
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1.
...from that place in a hall in an old farmhouse, at the foot of a narrow stairway that rose up to darkness at the top—no one believes I can remember my first steps; you heard it from your family, they say, but I remember I was alone and no one saw the things I saw; I know a man who remembers his own birth, I say, who remembers pain when he was pushed into his life—and I pulled myself upright by that stairway, turned and walked, uncertainly of course, back to the living room and the light.

2.
...on New Year’s Eve after I snuck out of church—the Watch Night Service where my family watched minutes crawl, sang hymns, and prayed until midnight—and outside in air so cold it hurt to breathe, air that rose up dense and smoky around me when I walked fast, faster over the snow crunching back at me, until I was running, exhilarated, until the twelve bells chimed and the drunk and godless yelled through their windows to the boy running by—Happy New Year, kid!—and all I wanted was to join the party.
3.
...alone from the East Station to the river, then west through courtyards and the palace gardens—and somewhere here among the fountains the sun finally broke through the trees, over the shops and hotels onto the first old man reading his morning paper on a bench wet with dew—to the Fields of Heaven and all the way up to the Place of the Star—and I understood, or thought I did for a minute, maybe two, the notion that the sun might need one of us each morning (and this morning it might be me) to bring it back over the crest with the power of our joy—and I returned to the river to stand in line before the sparkling tower.

4.
...in the Manistee National Forest on snowshoes, probably four feet on the ground already and more snow falling, and I lost direction out in the scrub oak and jack pine, then wandered for hours hearing only raven croaks and the deceptively close nuthatch calls, nasal and metallic, until I stumbled on a snowed-under fire-access two-track road I vaguely remembered and found my way back to my friends, their cabin, their woodstove and fire.