

Winter, Lower Longley, Tasmania

By Rafaella Del Bourgo

with a butter knife I scrape
frost off the inside of the kitchen windows
and there they are again
cow faces with their dark eyes
noses breathing steam
feet stamping in the snow

like the lamb
from the farm up the hill
and the black cat
they want to come in
they want to come in out of the cold
into the house which will be warm
as soon as the logs catch

on the table six ripe apricots
blushed with sun
plump with sweet water all the way from California
flown in then purchased at great expense
from the one market in town

I open the door for the cat
then shut it quickly
against the lamb and a possible cow stampede
sip a cup of coffee
with milk and sugar the way I like it

as snow continues to drift down
the cows wear white caps
white as the lamb who has kicked down his fence again
and is huddled on my back porch

two possums snuffle
snouts to the ground near the woodshed
looking for something to eat
from the Marsupials of Tasmania poster
I learn they are brushtails

Sulphur crested cockatoos winging overhead
screech like rusty hinges
the cows moo in response
the cat wakes up raises her head and yawns
these sounds and the occasional

whoosh of a lone car on our country road
are all that interrupt the silence of falling snow

we have no radio and no phone
we brought ten albums with us
and I've listened to them so often
that now I'm yelling at Waylon Jennings
Either go to the rodeo with Willy
or grow up and stay with your pregnant girlfriend
but whatever the hell you do
just stop your damn whining

I slept all night yet I'm so tired
my husband
is dazzling them at the university
and I fear that the turn my life was supposed to take
has already happened

I am sitting here alone
cows smearing my windows
with their noses and tongues
tilting their heads right and left
the cat on my lap
the lamb taken from the flock
as a plaything for the farmer's sons
still desolate on my porch

I'm watching the fire burn
and waiting to warm up
and maybe just maybe this is it
even though I'm living somebody else's life
maybe this is the turn