



## Angel Chimes

In a few days Christmas will descend  
on them, bearing the usual burden  
of breakable wonder, but tonight  
she and her sons will walk to the store  
to buy candles for the angel chimes.

When they return to their dark house,  
they will awaken the Christmas tree's  
blinking eyes, take turns lighting  
the slim white candles. And she,  
who no longer believes, will believe  
anything this close to Christmas.

The angels will wear the offering  
of light upon their wings.  
They will follow one another  
around the central star  
in a circle born entirely of light.

The song of their turning  
will tingle over the woman's skin.  
The children will be silent,  
turning in their own orbits.  
This close to Christmas  
she will believe  
they will never turn away.



*Silent Night*





## Christmas Eve

for Karl Schneider

Driving to your hand-built house deep in the woods,  
I'm wishing for a ring—a star-like stone to lead us  
to a new life together after the death of my husband  
and the loss of your long-time love. Dizzy from following  
taillights through the swirling snow, I enter the glow  
of your kitchen, the heavenly scent of baking bread.

Pulling a Santa hat over your long white hair,  
you say, *I've often been mistaken for the jolly old elf.*

Before I take off my boots, you want us to crunch  
through the snow to your workshop, to show me, you say,  
*the new toy* you bought yourself. I'm thinking  
it's some fancy tool or gadget. But just inside the door

stands my mother's drop-front secretary we brought  
back from my sister's barn in Kansas—broken by time  
in the years since Mom died—the red desk that lived  
in our kitchen, witness to every meal she cooked us.

Now here it is, whole again, and painted a scarlet  
deep as my mother's kiss, bronze handles gleaming  
from your caress. I almost fall to my knees  
in wonder at her presence in this chilly outbuilding.  
I can't imagine wishing for anything else—not the past  
for all its sweetness or the baubles of the future—  
only this moment and to kiss you, so I do.



## Snow Globe

If my childhood had been colder,  
I might not love the winter best  
of all the seasons. If snow had not  
been falling behind glass clouded  
by the breath of supper cooking.

If I had not owned figure skates,  
lived close enough to walk to the lagoon  
that froze for Christmas break each year.

If the icy breeze had not been cracked  
by giggling girls walking beside me,  
skates slung like careless wings over our shoulders.

If I hadn't known myself so loved  
that I could never die, I might have  
been more shaky the first time  
I trusted one lean blade to carry  
all my young yearning for flight,  
for beauty. Grandmother boasted

of a distant cousin who'd skated once  
in the Olympics. Even her name—Matey—  
was exotic as ice-glitter appearing  
where just weeks before rough boys with Camels  
hanging from curled lips had lowered  
hooks into the dark water.

Even falling down, I wasn't scared  
of going under. I was held up  
by the watchful eyes of aunts  
and mothers with faces smooth  
as the ice before our blades sliced it.

Even in my cords and parka,  
I was gliding toward their glamour,  
ignoring the scrape of hockey sticks  
when boys invaded. Already, I knew  
the future owned me, just as winter  
believes it owns the summer.

