

WOLF KILL AT DOE LAKE

for Ian Burgham

I snowshoe on the frozen lake; puddles fill my tracks, which makes me uneasy. A frozen waterfall forms a curtain of ice just inside the wood. Over bacon and eggs, your wife tells of a wolf kill she found. She goes out every day to see the deer, its beautiful black eyes dissolving as creature after creature takes something from the carcass, the larger animals coming first. A neighbour's beagle takes a hoof, the last remnant hanging from its mouth. Relaxing by the fire, I can't help but feel the wood interior of this house is holding onto what is said inside, and with each crackle and spark from the burning logs family secrets spill out, and all I can do is listen. It tells me a man from the other side of Doe Lake was found hanging from a rafter in his barn. He had climbed to the top and stood there, a rope around his neck, and while listening to birds busy in nearby trees, the lake partially visible, he leaned forward as if to kiss the wind. On the car ride back to the city I ask you about the man, if it was true what the wood said, that there was a man on the other side of Doe Lake who had hanged himself, that his brother had found him, the wind turning his body in small arcs, his blood settling into his legs and lower torso. And you say yes, and that it's not uncommon in these remote areas for people to take their own lives. You tell me his relatives keep the shameful secret—they say he drowned, the lake taking him into its murky arms. I think they may be right. I feel he is trapped in ice, and I have walked on his grave.