

**when, for the last time, she leaves**

Winter gnaws the last warmth out of Autumn  
6am windshields glazed in a fresh frost  
traces of cinnamon and hot cider  
give way to the neighbor's children sledding in their yard.  
the birds have flown south but not you  
monogamy is the only jazz you know how to play,  
but no one nuzzles your shoulder during the ballgame  
and you haven't made your own hot cocoa in years.  
what's left: a note on the table, her scent in your towel  
no rampage  
just winter and a house you no longer belong in  
*what grocery aisle is the stain remover in?*  
the laundry has piled higher than the slush the plow trucks leave  
note on the mahogany bedside, note as the slayer of future.  
up the stairwell, down the stairwell, up again  
no one clamors after you, no one talks of the morning's news  
hope as the quiet assassin of reason.  
bed made because you've memorized her love language  
*if you love something let it go, if it returns, it's yours forever*  
wrong.  
fable as a lone stocking at christmas, stuffed with the candy you bought yourself.  
you know she is really gone by how she penned her note:

*Plants are watered on Friday. Keep the linens and candles.*

-A