4-1-2013

A Walk Across the Ice; Golden Spike; Ink

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A Walk Across the Ice

During the sea blizzards
she had her
own portrait painted.
   —Ann Sexton, “The Double Image”

Winter's what we're walking into. Our veins
map blue highways,
routes first traced
by William Least Heat Moon
in a travelogue my mother read me
years ago, before I could read myself,

before I wondered if Persephone
blamed her mother
for dragging her home by the braids.
Controlling bitch. But

winter's what we're walking into.
If I put my arm in her arm,
will it sink too far
into the interior,
like a bone spur,
or a stent?

It's late. The light is brief.
If her boots leak, mine fit her,

and so we walk into winter.
   Our shared DNA
makes us too unstable for skates,
but there is a gliding,
a set of parallel tracks,

an ease,

because we did not take the cocker spaniel with her large infected ears—

because our postmenopausal bones
are light and porous—

and because the lake ice
is thick enough for a Zamboni,
so I can't fall through, 
and she can't rescue me.

Golden Spike

“It doesn't pay to try, 
All the smart boys know why.”
—Johnny Thunders

i.

To cure insomnia, 
don't try. Pretend 
the bed's a bunk 
in a Pullman car, 
bolted to the floor, 
but moving steadily 
from A to B. 
The trick's to picture 
neither A nor B 
but the space 
between characters, 
large and yet limited, 
like time— 
how it elapses 
everywhere at once, 
despite the zones 
fixed by railway 
executives in 1883. 
Wrong clock, 
thought the Chinese 
laborers who ached 
but could not write. 
The pain spread 
from their arms 
into their spines.

ii.
All the smart transcontinental titans know
vision is motion. To be
is not to be, but to go.
A koan: *keeping moving.*
An hour lost in Maine
is lost in California.

**Ink**

*Samuel Steward, d. 1993*

The tattoo artist's
testicular tumor
came from a teratoma,
a malabsorbed embryonic twin.
The doctor said what mattered
was a cure.
The tattooist demurred:
what mattered to him
was the little sib lodged
in his right teste,
expanding benignly
at first, then deadly.

The teratoma took it slow.
Always the muffled music.
Always the black ink bath.
Always the guest in the guestroom
repeating
its fragments of DNA.
The tattooist covered
his calves with roses.
He wanted to send a single
stem to his twin,
but it couldn't be delivered
past the blood-brain barrier,
past the wall in the heart
that holds the possible
and the impossible
in adjoining cells,
but apart.