

## Kate Lutzner

### The winter of snow

We buried the blackbird in the snow piled up by my window.  
It was so high you couldn't see out. The bird's wing must have been  
broken. We were not in the practice of diagnosing back then.  
There were spots of blood leading to the burial site and you were leaned  
over the place eating a snow cone made of ice and grenadine.  
In those days, we could do two things at once, like grieve and eat.  
I filled my hands with snow and covered the bird, gave it a good  
Christian burial even though we were Jews and we knew nothing  
about Christian burials. You were going to your friend's house  
after that – you wanted to pull out a feather and bring it along,  
but I said maybe it carried disease. That spring, the snow thawed  
and the bird made an appearance, back in our lives, that sick piece  
of architecture we had romanticized into something akin to love.  
It was shriveled, a tiny replica of itself. I had slept next to it  
all winter, only the thin wall dividing us. I cried the day the snow  
melted, looking down at that small, new bird in its shallow  
grave. I saw the faces of everyone I loved, knowing that some  
day, they would find themselves in a similar place, and so  
would I.

## Dinner at Matteo's

What you need to know is, on the way home,  
I walked a woman of maybe twenty-five back  
to her car. My sister, whose husband had been killed,  
was with us. They were talking about tattoos, how one pain  
takes away another pain. "Did you lose someone?" my sister  
asked, and the girl, you could see the tears behind her pale eyes,  
said her sister had passed away at twenty three. I felt  
like the only one who hadn't experienced loss - instead of lucky,  
it was a sense of being left out. And then, immediately,  
guilt. Men turned to look at the girl in her grief. We walked her  
to her car and stood there, no one saying anything, the stars deciding  
what to do, a pair of dogs playing or fighting, I could not tell which.  
The next day, my sister called and we dissected the walk, how little  
we felt we had done to help the young woman. The flowers then  
were blooming - if you slowed down, you could see the petals  
spreading open.

1979

In the photograph, I am standing on the badminton court  
and I am smiling. You can almost see the lake in the distance.  
The day the photo was taken, my sister and I sat on the swing between  
two trees with a boy who touched each of us and neither of us knew it.  
There is something called dissociation we were good at even then, even at ten  
with a stranger's hand beneath our skirts, one of us looking off towards the lake,  
the other thinking about blueberries. Later, we would go into town  
and Ray Liotta from TV would be at Old Macdonald's Farm  
and we would get his autograph on our arms. I wouldn't wash mine  
for a series of days until my mother told me I was filthy and I would scrub  
at his loosened name until the skin came off. That's the summer  
I got my period and bled through four sets of sheets. My mother was nice  
about it, taking them to the Laundromat, putting the quarters in  
the slots. I won a Super Ball in the machine.

## Behavior

A pit bull attacked my dog and my dog was bleeding  
as I carried him across the street and I realized  
I had never loved anyone as I cradled his tiny body  
in my arms. I was wearing the green dress with the back  
cut out and a man winked at me – I remember that –  
and then I was knocking at the door of the woman who owned  
the pit bull and I was screaming that I was a lawyer and these  
sounds were coming from my dog's throat and a small crowd  
had gathered at the bottom of the street. His fur was cardinal  
red now so I turned around and my shoe broke as I was turning –  
everyone was staring at me – and I carried him to the grass  
where you could tell by the indentation someone  
had just been. I sat next to him, trying for his sake not to cry,  
and he looked right at me.

## Some time ago

A bird flew into the law school building  
so we put bird shadows up.  
The bird was stunned for a few minutes  
and then flew off. I don't want to tell you this,  
but legend has it animals go somewhere to die.  
A few girls were giggling to handle their grief.  
Mine sat in a Styrofoam cup, the type popular  
in those days. You could have guessed  
there were tears in there, but it was really the projection  
of all I felt. I was far from home, from the parents  
who had raised me if not well, then with intention.  
That tiny bird, its frail bones and feathers  
like a loose dress. Oh, my difficult loneliness.  
You could argue all loneliness is difficult.  
I am not going to talk you out of it.