

JANET FRASER  
**TALL TALES**

I picture him in the War  
with his Scottish ancestors  
on an Orkney Island hilltop  
telling stories that stretch  
into the racing clouds  
that carry them west to Ireland  
where they grow taller

My father enters a hospitality suite  
full of hopelessly dull farts  
comparing stock prices  
and golf scores  
parts the way and has them  
snorting and chortling  
thinking themselves witty  
and life-loving  
All eyes on my father's  
slits of glee  
his throat guzzles golden suds  
the shake of the head  
isn't it all crazy  
and wonderful at the same time

Saturdays my father drives his children  
and Siberian husky  
yelping out the window  
Tales about his childhood  
golfing mobsters  
in Louisville

his tenor voice broken  
while yodelling in Tennessee  
his mother who died  
and came back at a public pool  
in Lexington  
how he won the tri-state  
tennis championship  
and moved  
back to Nova Scotia  
where he was beaten up  
for playing tennis  
and became a hockey star  
that we shouldn't care  
about bullies  
dare them to punch us  
like he did  
after secretly boxing

When I was a young woman  
deadlocked in grief  
over my faithless husband  
he told me about  
his red-haired golfer  
true love who married  
and divorced three times  
and the cheerful nurse  
who wore his ring  
all through the War  
then left him for a frat boy  
and my beautiful mother  
who broke his heart  
on the honeymoon  
Said I should give up  
what's not mine

My father who in his morphine-addicted dying  
told stories  
to a pot of geraniums  
he thought was a hospital visitor  
traded tales in French  
with his demented mother  
whispered little jokes  
in between swigs of lemon barley  
The force  
who fought death  
with every last gasp left  
to tell his story