

Deep Red

Christmas afternoon. The gifts opened
and the wrappers burned; glitter gone
from all but children's eyes, I ride out
into the country with my brother.

Winter wheat glistens keen as fur
across the fields; the cattle are dreams;
the world a postcard mailed from far-
away—so we get out to read.

Armadillos everywhere—
opossum, crow, woodpecker, rabbit.
Hungover from last night, my brother
holds up a turtle shell as though

he'd just won his first merit badge.
After war and divorce, we've come home
to look for bones and feathers in the sand
of a dry river. Cottonwoods stand guard.

I wonder at the blood between us;
how the open world contains
brothers and stars and armadillos—
the strange magnetics of love and hate.

Somewhere ahead, the crows are jabbering.
It's the owl telling them an old story
as light fails deep red
through the black tangle of trees.

— *Rawdon Tomlinson*