

MONICA KIDD

The Well

She warned us she'd do it,
 Cried the whole winter long about
 wanting to leave.
 Said she'd take the sled,
 the hungry dogs yelping
 and the winds that eat you through
 had nothing against these voices,
 the undead and their whispering riddles.
 She bargained, unblinking:

*Take my shoes,
 cut my hair,
 sew my lips closed
 and shut me away.
 Save me.*

Well, we let her rave, like you would,
 thinking a break in the weather
 and some cod liver oil would do the trick.
 Poor old May. Never knew she had it in her.

Phonse Walsh was the only one slight enough
 to make it down the well.
 And by slight, I guess you know I don't mean
 just skinny. He was simple, like. One of god's own.
 We tied his feet with rope
 and let him down slowly,
 so as not to startle him, of course—
 he was simple, not stupid.

And when his outstretched fingers
brushed her arm, he gave out a little cry
for us to stop.

And he hung there a time,
his own voice ringing in his ears
and the sound of water
dripping, dropping.

Old Phonse, he fished through that cold black
until he found poor May's feet, and then her dress,
flattened to her chest as though hiding from fear,
and he took out of his pocket a piece of rope,
and he tied that dress close around her ankles,
as befits a lady.

They broke the surface like newborn twins
still breathless on the busy air,
Phonse the reluctant survivor,
and May, delivered.