**Mercies**

It was a difficult year.

As could be expected, frost

seized

the fields and

promptly lost its hold.

Figuring them

in patterns that could not be read

as he knew he had once had the power

to read them before.

Struggling each morning

over a burgeoning maze of

ice, crammed with the stems of

useless vegetation

and–down in one corner

a solitary crocus. The unreadiness of which

troubled him with nagging disproportion.

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For many nights, he lay below the eaves

on the bed he had kept since childhood

and thought about the burden of the land

which, alongside other fleeting things;

robins, battling with a ferocity

incongruent to their size–

the steady reliability of returning cows

lending their breath to the evening

had compelled him to witness

the terrible and unspoken diminishment

of his parent’s strength.

The swiftness of its passing only matched

by the slowly mounting bitterness

of barely weathered winters.

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But things were not always as linear

as it seemed that they would be. When the frost

came back

and this time did its job–

blanketing the fields

with a patent uniformity of bleakness

It seemed that he was able to find, or was provided with

only under condition of that extremity

some lingering reminder of a sweetness.

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He felt it, some days

in things as unassuming as the light

mustering itself

for one last burst of intensity

over a colourless sky

and, on others

through the quiet observation of his father.

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Noticing in him

some reservoir of undiluted strength

kept, only for the most demanding

of physical tasks.

Or, on another occasion

after the frost had melted for a second time

the cautious re-assumption of a reverence

with which he approached the space

three stalls down from the store.

Accustomising its resident

to the startling coldness of a metal disc

and moving its surface to sound

the unwavering presence

of two neat calves;

hammocked in blood

under the ilium

which jutted like a blade

in lonelier seasons.