

KIM TRAINOR

WHITEMUD

The ravine after snowfall. Blue shadows and sunlight. Brutal cold. In Edmonton, it has been unnaturally warm all winter, you say, but I arrived the day the polar vortex edged west. The patterns are shifting. It's why you're here, tracking research on the vulnerability and resilience of the boreal. It's why I'm here, to be with you. It's too cold to hike down to the creek thickened with ice, or even ten minutes beyond the trailhead. Just far enough to see what you brought me here to see, mountain ash at the trail's edge, clutches of scarlet berries capped with snow, which, from a distance yesterday, as you ran these trails, you said, looked like Vancouver cherry trees in bloom. I will remember this.

And later, in the dark, how you translate one of the psalms of praise, of one who healeth the broken in heart, bindeth their wounds, tells the stars' numbers and calls each one by name. Makes rain, makes grass to grow over mountains. Feeds the young ravens. Gives snow like wool, scatters hoarfrost like ashes, casts forth ice. For who can withstand this cold? You turn to me. Your breath warms me. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. The beginning as the ending, always the same.