

JANE TIMS

CAMPFIRE IN WINTER

1.

campfire inadequate
camp stool uncomfortable
alderscape unbeautiful

nevertheless the kindling
is dry in the knap sack
matches
yellow apples wrapped in newsprint
a knife

2.

you leave the fire the starting and tending
to me also the preparation of sharpened sticks
and apples

you swing the ax
hack at the alders

3.

the apples acquire a layer of soot
the flesh swells the skin splits
cider weeps on the fire sings the song
of tea at boil
I breathe sweet steam
and smoke

you bend to taste
sauce beneath the skin
smile at me
agree 'it is wonderful'
turn away from the fire
hack at the alders

as usual you have missed
the point
the lingering to talk about nothing
in particular to listen to the snow
sizzle beside the fire

I slide my teeth along the surface of the apple
rind slips like satin from the bed
I swallow the peel ash and all
taste the discontinuity
where warmth meets
the cold
of the core

4.
my face too hot
my back too cold
my eyes are full of smoke

the trick is to concentrate on fire and keep
the chill from bone
pretend not to know
the moment will come
we fill the fire pit with snow
and black advances
on every side

5.

backpack empty
our lungs exhale
trees are parallel and grey

we trudge towards home
wronged by the quenching of fire