

Monty Reid / THE DREAM OF  
THE SNOWY OWLS

1

Slow wings. The arrival,  
late in October, of snow.  
It begins and you have  
never learned to expect it  
because nothing changes  
fast enough. Love,  
wisdom, weather.  
Owl on a pole.

2

From the overpass north to the beaverdam is eight miles of meander, deadfall. They got up, spread a hard white wax on their skis and broke trail up the creek. Moonlight quilted to the snow, shadow stitched from bare willow branches. Once they heard an owl and stopped. Twice they found the end of tracks. Shit, green bark in the scrub, rosehips with a faint red still in them like wineglasses in the morning, gnawed. The rabbit flushed, then wings.

They remembered angels. How they fell into fresh snow backwards and tried to get up, to walk away in their own footprints; no unnecessary marks. But now in the creekbed sweat cools against their skin and they need motion to release them. Returning, snow filters through gaps in black poplar along the bank, the flakes weightless, as petals off the cherry tree in the garden in May, collapsing not in the late frost but in sunlight afterwards. Two miles out she broke a tip and had to walk the rest of the way.

3

He rarely dreams but dreams owls. Fixed eyes.  
Snow on the highway. They refuse to move, perched  
on shattered roadkill with intestines in their beaks,  
brown bands deep across breast and wing. Not the  
immaculate birds of midwinter but spring, the hollow  
bones brooding with instinct, ready to fly north.

Indifferent. The first one he hit barely moved.  
Later, they walked towards the wheels, owl after  
owl, exploding like pillows, tho in his hands there  
is no feeling. The air is soft as feathers. In the  
mirror he would discover them intact, unruffled, pivoting  
absolutely, unable to turn only their heads, towards  
his disappearance.

In the end it was deliberate. Steering at them, foot  
rammed with belief against the floor.

He rarely dreams and when he does the dreams wake him.  
Moonlight quivers on the glass.



4

In the summer they are gone.  
He sleeps with the window  
open and sweats into the pillow.  
In the public library, an owl  
mounted on a cut maple, a patch  
of rabbit fur in its talons.  
The librarian cannot remember  
who donated it.

5

early March, driving  
home from the city  
in a wet snow, an  
owl  
    caught in solid  
light, lifted  
so slowly from the shoulder

no feather, wing, just  
a thud on the glass, an  
imagined flailing  
out of the light  
and behind him

tho he stopped, the  
snow melting  
audibly  
on the pavement



6

undreamt, the owl  
flies from the pole  
or does not fly

                  that  
there are wings, silent,  
held, among curtains, glass,  
a body of light persistent  
in snow, a particular  
symmetry

that the owl, at  
least, assumes air  
and the air  
embraces it