

## SKIMMING THE POND

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*Jane Poston*

In the colder winters,  
the Japanese carp suck  
the ice for oxygen,  
and we put our ears  
to the snow over the pond  
to listen with breaths held  
for the long hiss  
that is ghostly  
and underneath  
like our hearts.

And when, like shadows,  
the carp rise, one by one,  
under the surface of the ice,  
we get the buzzsaws,  
cut a hole in the ice.  
The carp leap up  
crimson and sun-orange  
striking the snow. Scattered,  
they could be poppies,  
or orchids waving  
their heavy waxen heads.  
Still, we picture them  
changed from this form—  
pink and fine-boned  
as a love poem  
I would write you.

Always there is something new  
to learn at this game.  
*Like this*—you say  
and snap a spine between  
thumb and fingers.  
*Like this*—turning pliers  
plucking fins into a bowl.

It is what to do  
to anything unfamiliar  
or too delicate.  
It is what to do to anything  
that takes the place of  
what one cannot approach.