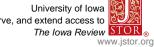
## SHOTGUNS

The day after Christmas Blackbirds lifted like a shadow Of an oak, slow leaves Returning to bare branches. We followed them, a hundred Small premeditated murders Clustered in us like happiness. We had the scent of girls On our hands & in our mouths, Moving like jackrabbits from one Dream to the next. Brandnew Barrels shone against the day & stole wintery light From trees. In the time it took To run home & grab Daddy's gun, The other wing-footed boys Stumbled from the woods. Johnny Lee was all I heard A siren in the flesh, The name of a fallen friend In their wild throats. Only Joe Stayed to lift Johnny's head Out of the ditch, rocking back & forth. The first thing I did Was to toss the shotgun Into a winterberry thicket, & didn't know I was running To guide the paramedics into The dirt-green hush. We sat In a wordless huddle outside The operating room, till a red light Over the door began pulsing Like a broken vein in a skull.



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