

John Benske

WINTER SCENE

The boys are playing cards again, late night,
beers around the table. Someone throws out
a chip, another follows, the pot rises.

In the fireplace, two logs burn in the center
and a third is already ashes. An Irish setter
lies in front of the fire, asleep.

The windows are frosted. I am cold. I lie
in the bed alone. I will die alone.
It was the same for my mother.

Someone should make a movie about this,
one of the card players says. He's not
serious, just losing, and wants to be a hero.

The Irish setter dreams of a rabbit
in the deep snow, unable to run
as the long red legs bound above the drifts.

It was the same for my mother,
in bed alone, the windows frosted.
She was cold as death.

What kind of a movie? another man says.
He pictures them in suits
with tumblers of bourbon, a paddlewheel turning.

The rabbit is trapped. Until moments ago
it was asleep, not even aware
of the snow above it, and hunters moving close.

Like a frosted window, my mother,
lying in her bed alone,
cold, the same as I will be.

A movie about gamblers, the first one says.
Screw-ups like us, having a good time.
Who cares what it means?

The rabbit's heart pounds so fast
it can't breathe. The snow dusted fur
on its back is white like its stomach.

In her bed alone, the same as I will be,
she looks to windows frosted,
but sees only the cold, my mother.

I care, one of them says. He gets up
from the table and goes to the fire.
He warms himself, pets the sleeping dog.