

## **RYAN SMITH**

### LUSK AT THE LAKE

For his fifth birthday Lusk was  
given a birthday cake, but no candles—  
no candles, his father said,  
a hand on his mother's shoulder,  
no force, but managing to hold her—  
*no candles*. Have you seen  
what hope does to a man?

Lusk did not understand.

He had not yet seen Lake Superior,  
grey water, not blue at all,  
a magnanimous periphery  
of shells that held no oceans,

his father at the center of the  
long rope bridge, eyes wide,  
and Lusk sitting at the far  
end saying

will you come if I meet  
you out there, and hold  
your hand?

The waves coming and coming,  
stealing his answer.