

Chris O'Brien

**Black Water**

My father augers swirling metal shark teeth  
into the frozen lake.

A dune of powder rises and dissolves as  
black water erupts from the puncture.

He settles, an inflated mound on his plywood box,  
and drops his line in the hole.

Time to stop talking  
though he said he had nothing but time. My mother  
cut out the picture from the newspaper  
of men with lunch boxes like black barns,  
double gates swinging closed behind them, but she didn't tape it  
to the refrigerator.

Another distant mound flings silver on the ice  
and I follow my stiff red boots  
to undersize bluegill and perch  
littering the white glare like sunset-bellied beer cans,  
some crystallized fossils embedded in the crust,  
others reflecting clouds in  
their newly air-drowned stare.

Mound says it cleans out the lake,  
too many little ones, not enough to go around.  
I see neighbor kids  
strewn in the back of their driveway,  
pink and red snowsuit shrouds.

I perforate the ice arms burning under wind-bit cheeks  
and drop a fish into each hole like Easter eggs in cups of color.  
Some of them swim away.