

**What Will You Do, God, When I Die?**

—after Rilke

What will you do, God, when I die—  
when the last bell of Santa Catarina  
leaves her winter carol and snow  
begins its slow, fulfilling moment of erasure.

What will children say about the moon  
who now has no reflection?

How will the raven greet your morning  
without my steady shovel, the crack  
of the long curved axe  
splitting the frozen air? Who will clear the soot  
from the crenellated chimney, the ash  
from the fire's brick box, light  
the crumpled lists and vanished symphonies  
that spark each day's new kindling?

Will you shoulder the battered bucket,  
the two blue metal barrels  
parked under the gutters, carry again  
each precious month of rain?

Will you stack and stoke the fire  
with the same orchestration—  
a pyramid of pine,  
a stick of clean-split cedar, set  
the coffee boiling in the white Sears pot,  
the steel tureen of Anasazi beans  
fat on the cast iron stove.  
Bring each hour to simmer  
in such burble and aroma?

Who will ride with my three-braid rope  
to rein in the Lightys' mare when shots  
go off from a lost hunter's gun  
and she breaks down the wall of the barn,

and if another porcupine  
    lashes their brainless Jackie—grab  
these gloves and pliers, yank a thousand spines  
from the corgi's wretched face?

God, what will you do  
    when I can no longer find  
this pen, this page, the soft dawn  
of the silver fox tracking her song in the snow,

when hoof beats on the mesa  
    become another animal, another cloud  
forming its fleet of battleships, another  
country rising from my resignation?

Will you take my father's saddle  
    from the tack house? Put the Zuni blankets  
back up on the wall? Take me back  
to the trunk line trails, bells and summer sheep

crossing the Ortegas, Servilleta,  
    Canjilón, the Vallecitos mill. Back  
to Katie Harris. Katie. Katie Harris. Oh Lord—

Katie Harris. Will you take me back.