

Come Winter

a poem in honour of Victoria's first snowfall of the winter, December 2006

In this island city, snow comes
like an unexpected guest, the kind
you only hear from in holiday cards
and phone calls from the north, but now
out of nowhere, here he is on your front step
with a bottle of chardonnay in one hand,
and a fruitcake in the other:
you don't know whether to open the door
or draw the curtains and hide.

Outside, the moon's a blur,
as if every star in the cosmos
has come loose from its moorings,
galaxies shaken out and falling.
Night gives up its darkness
to a pale blue glow. You sleep
in a world covered over by light.

Morning, you look out your window
and realize this is no dream.
Across the road, a snowman stares
back at you with wet black eyes
and stones pressed into a half-smile.
With thin stick arms outstretched,
he could be a messenger sent
from some mysterious republic
to welcome you into this
monochrome land.

Down your front walk, you shovel
a way out, a way back to the familiar,
the greener world of rain and wind
and flying cherry blossoms.
In his own yard, your next-door neighbour
clears a path. Beneath his heavy coat and scarf,
and that toque pulled down to warm his ears,
he could be anyone – stranger, imposter,
undercover alien, like this world
you find yourself alive in,
this white planet, this winter city.
Hello, you call across the new quiet. Hello.

Carla Funk