

Two Poems

by [Andy Havens](#) (March 2020)



Red House and Spruces, Edvard Munch, 1927

Frozen Stories

In the Midwest I stood squint
in the bonefocused wind, making
a risky reckoning best left to the wise,

measuring a slab of ice against the way
the weather's been and how long
and daring (or not) to step out onto it.

But this is Northwest February and
I barely get to speak of ice at all out here,
or hear tales of boys fallen through

over the years and how once you're under
the black water moves to keep you.

I barely get to speak of ice out here

or worry that a spot of skin's gone white.

The weather asks so little of me
that I've begun to beg memory to list

wispy words and show hung pictures
of winterfear. But memory's different
from knowing like guessing's different

from fearing and I know that if I ever

do get to speak of ice out here
it'll be so whisperthin that every one

of mom's drowning boys would have
measured it beneath them to even try.
They would just walk around the sound,

well trained by a place where
the weather asks so much of them
and ice is always on their tongues.

Morning's Mile

In the cities there is nothing
to milk but time. You are spared
the poetics of rote labor.

There is no duty to recall
in that strange awakening
of late adulthood

mother's feathered hands
or the careful thud, thud,
thud of father's boots trying

helplessly not to wake you yet.

In the cities when young
men find themselves wearing

their own fathers' rent vestments
they do not smell like
dirt, shit, and oil.

They smell like paper
and staples and the florid
lining of a brass-clasped

briefcase swung swish,
swish against a silk-slacked
thigh.

In the cities young fathers

grow up slight and light

because their histories weigh

less and don't ask much

muscle to carry around.

They lack the heraldic sound

of the only engine in a morning's mile

being turned churlishly over and

breathing exhausted clouds into an

unhidden sky. But in the city in

the street where a thousand engines run

you don't hear a single one.

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

Andy Havens writes poetry, fiction, and essays in Seattle, Washington. His poetry has been published at Seattle University, and his short fiction has been a finalist in a Glimmer Train competition. Andy is a dedicated husband, full-time father, and US Army veteran who is studying the Arabic language.

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