

# I Know, I Remember, But How Can I Help You

By Hayden Carruth

The northern lights. I wouldn't have noticed them  
 if the deer hadn't told me  
 a doe her coat of pearls her glowing hoofs  
 proud and inquisitive  
 eager for my appraisal  
 and I went out into the night with electrical steps  
 but with my head held also proud  
 to share the animal's fear  
 and see what I had seen before  
 a sky flaring and spectral  
 greenish waves and ribbons  
 and the snow under strange light tossing in the pasture  
 like a storming ocean caught  
 by a flaring beacon.  
 The deer stands away from me not far  
 there among bare black apple trees  
 a presence I no longer see.  
 We are proud to be afraid  
 proud to share  
 the silent magnetic storm that destroys the stars  
 and flickers around our heads  
 like the saints' cold spiritual agonies  
 of old.  
 I remember but without the sense other light-storms  
 cold memories discursive and philosophical  
 in my mind's burden  
 and the deer remembers nothing.  
 We move our feet crunching bitter snow while the storm  
 crashes like god-wars down the east  
 we shake the sparks from our eyes  
 we quiver inside our shocked fur  
 we search for each other  
 in the apple thicket—  
 a glimpse, an acknowledgment  
 it is enough and never enough—  
 we toss our heads and say good night  
 moving away on bitter bitter snow.

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Hayden Carruth was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, and was educated at the University of North Carolina and the University of Chicago. He taught at Syracuse University for many years and worked for several literary magazines, including as the editor of Poetry magazine. He published over thirty books of poetry and criticism, and was awarded several top prizes. Much of his poetry, including "The Bearer," is set in Northern Vermont, a setting with which Carruth often mixes his radical political beliefs. He frequently combined rural life with verbal resourcefulness, strongly influenced by jazz and blues music.

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