By Gail Mazur

In the warming house, children lace their skates, bending, choked, over their thick jackets.

A Franklin stove keeps the place so cozy it’s hard to imagine why anyone would leave, clumping across the frozen beach to the river. December’s always the same at Ware’s Cove, the first sheer ice, black, then white and deep until the city sends trucks of men with wooden barriers to put up the boys’ hockey rink. An hour of skating after school, of trying wobbly figure-8’s, an hour of distances moved backwards without falling, then—twilight, the warming house steamy with girls pulling on boots, their chafed legs aching. Outside, the hockey players keep playing, slamming the round black puck until it’s dark, until supper. At night, a shy girl comes to the cove with her father. Although there isn’t music, they glide arm in arm onto the blurred surface together, braced like dancers. She thinks she’ll never be so happy, for who else will find her graceful, find her perfect, skate with her in circles outside the emptied rink forever?

“Ice” from Zeppo’s First Wife: New and Selected Poems by Gail Mazur. Copyright © 2005 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

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