

every winter is exactly the same
August Hawley

i am standing in the snow and i see
eleven, twelve, thirteen years unfolding when i look behind me:

my sister and i with our snow pants and boots
studying the crystals on our sleeves
and building burrows in the ditch,

a storm so violent that i could escape captivity unseen;
the sound of every footstep absorbed like it
was never there at all,

all the time spent
searching for one of my sister's nicest winter
gloves that disappeared into the snow for good,

the night i was pinned to the ground
and felt saliva start to freeze to my face,

laughing in the school parking lot in denim jackets
not thick enough and hands searching for warmth in
the pockets.

it's true, some parts of me have gone missing
for awhile, only to return when
i see cows grazing at the farm where my dad
used to work
when i was only in preschool, in the the house
my sister may have been too little to remember,
with the flowered wallpaper and ugly carpet.

i wasn't expecting to find anything here,
but here i am.
some parts of me, of course, are gone for good.

accepting this is just as hard
as the remembering, and also as strange,
and also as beautiful.

my life—
a million snowflakes around me
and every star in the sky—
my sister's pink glove, surely smaller than we remember,
long decomposed in the ditch in front of
the house i live in now
or maybe at the school playground, where our cousin
wears pink gloves just like them.

sometimes, you lose things in december
and it seems like they're just gone,
but when the snow melts they're still there, waiting
for you.

and sometimes they really have vanished.
there's no need to be angry anymore, there will be
other gloves. and other memories.
and other selves, even, each one completely unique.
and yet.