

**KAREN JOHNSON**

**Deep Winter**

It happens every year, the same  
imperceptible crossing of  
the light, the future perfect  
counterpoint to the beginning of  
dragging the shovels out of the barn,  
mounting the plow, the blower cleaned and  
candles ready for the darkening  
which has already come  
which will always be  
which is no more and no less  
than a flake on the back of the ox  
which once pulled down the high wall  
of the shed with one shake  
of its head, teeth clenched tight on the tether  
and the lantern suddenly flaring.