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## Poems I Found on My Way to Work: January 31--Icy, the Temperature Just at Freezing

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# Poems I Found on My Way to Work

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*David Schelhaas*

## January 31—Icy, the Temperature Just at Freezing

I remember my grandfather  
forty years ago walking to our house  
with brand new spiked  
galoshes on his feet. “Now I  
am sharp shod,” he exclaimed, and he not even  
a native speaker of the language.

Sometime tyrant, failed farmer, amateur theologian,  
he put on English like an old sweater  
after his daughters urged him to pray  
in a language their children could understand  
at our Sunday feasts. Even the most prickly  
of us grandkids would be quieted by the easy way  
he’d chat with God—about cousin Nels gone to college,  
the oats crop, the bountiful table spread before us,  
on and on he would pray as if he and God were old  
fishing buddies with all the time in the world  
and both fluent in English for as long as they could remember.

## February 9—Ash Wednesday

This morning, while Christians  
all around this blue-green globe received  
a fingerprint of ash upon their brows,  
you reached down to touch the dead  
land where I sometimes struggle to believe  
and left a fingerprint of snow and frost.  
Grimy streets, old piles of leaves,  
corn-stalked fields,  
even the tips of the naked trees  
were in the night made white,  
no, whiter, than snow.