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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

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.