

SANDY SHREVE

Snow Sestina

for Maggie Benston

The mountain doffs its cap of cloud
to the dazzling art of snow
and standing here with all this in my eyes
I breathe in several degrees below
zero, up to my knees in powder
a breeze caressing my face

I cannot begin to fill my eyes
with the clarity of winter air Here below
the sudden frescoes of snow
miles distant, I feel face to face
with those sweeping strokes of powder
paintings, fallen from a cloud

This morning sounds like powder
floating in the air Just below
the stillness of a willow cloaked in snow
I bend to form an angel out of cloud
that's landed here to cool my face
and tantalize my eyes

It sparkles crystalline, this eau de snow
now melting on my mitten, scents my face
the one perfume I'll wear, a dab of cloud
here, on my forehead, neck and just below
each ear, each touch as soft as powder
puffs, swift as the blink of eyes

The beauty of geometry in snow
is like a poem and the grin on your face
when I said I loved the math in words—cloud
covered thoughts unveiled like equations, eyes
opened to shifting solutions, below
above and around each phrase, whimsical as powder

in a wind, images and ideas to create, then face
and balance as best I can—the way snow
can be both flurry and blizzard, powder
and firm, a pleasure to the eyes
and agony for skin, glowering in a pewter cloud
while lighting up night on the ground below

The mountains flaunt white powder, while below
city dwellers' eyes are on the sky, dread any cloud
that delivers more snow than we know how to face

Sandy Shreve grew up in Sackville, New Brunswick. She is the Departmental Assistant for Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. This poem is from her recently published collection Bewildered Rituals (Polestar Press, 1992)