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To Boxer, Fiver, and Hazel

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To Boxer, Fiver, and Hazel

Someone's splitting wood in the snow behind the house.
Strong afternoon light surrounds every tree.
Putting a log in the wood stove
I stoke up the fire and go outside, opening the shed door

to get my bridle. Three dead rabbits lie stiff
huddled in a heap, limp heads
flung over chests and backs, their hind legs
twisted. Their pink eyes stare
out of white fur piled like a mound
of grave winter fields, burying my bridle.

The broadaxe swings down, each half of the log
cleaved to ground. Echoes crack into the open shed door.
The white bark of birch trees stain in crimson dusk
spreading slow and thick
behind the thin forest of the pasture.

I shut the door. Grabbing a pail of oats
I throw them over the fence. Three days later
I pluck soft, white hair from my bridle.