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Sestina

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Sestina

Silent night. The feather flakes of snow
Flutter gently, like the plastic ball
We used to shake when we were small and watch
The white whirl down upon a village scene.
   The men are loading for a trip to sea—
   And have you heard? They won’t back down this time.

That landscape there—I recall the time
I sat on Father’s lap and watched the snow
Droop the pine boughs to the ground, that sea
Was just our fields; we ate popcorn balls
Around the fire.
   The ships approach the scene,
   In readiness to fire; they wait and watch.

I liked to follow my brother and watch
Him fish through the ice, and wait a long time,
So still, he seemed frozen in the scene;
I left him soon and made angels in the snow.
   The backs of the men have felt the golden ball
   In the west go out like a candle, in the sea.
Deep blue and black blends the sky and sea
Along the horizon; the glassy eyes watch.
I'll never forget that icy snowball
He put down my back, or remember the time
We woke up and saw a blanket of snow
As high as the window?—not a track on the scene.

"And now a word from the international scene:
Twenty-five Russian ships are crossing the sea..."
He would have loved this fluttering snow,
Which stills and lulls the minds of those who watch
Into a presence of good and peaceful times
When earth was like our plastic ball.
"A tiny shape, like a floating football
Slips through the horizon on the east scene."
The whirling flakes have no sense of time
Or place, or start or finish: this white sea
Is only now; with wonder we watch
It cover our barn, this tiny snow.

Fresh, lovely snow, on this great whirling ball,
The earth, we watch your peaceful silver scene,
While a raging sea brings forth a darker time.