

Midwinter Malaise

A lone robin huddles
in the old dogwood tree,
shivering (as only birds can shiver)
realizing (as only birds can realize)
a serious miscalculation has been made.

It's hard for the robin to know
whether to stay or whether to go.

A woman sits alone
with her coffee growing old,
realizing (as others have realized)
pondering (as others have pondered)
what recalibration can be made.

It's hard for her to know
if it's too late to stay
or too late to go.

The robin and the woman
cling to their perches,
he to his branch,
she to her chair.

All they know,
as far as they can know,
it's too hard to stay
in a world gone cold.

Diane Melby

Originally published in the Anthology of Appalachian Writers, v. XVII, 2025.