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Cold Bearing

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Barry Sternlieb

Cold Bearing

Last spring, when that rogue
Alberta Clipper locked
the valley down, I walked
our buried road

with the dog around dawn, then
noticed a new calf steaming in Leon's
field, the mother so confused she never began
licking, too stunned to move. I knocked on

his kitchen window and let him know.
He laughed in thanks since age
creates snow of its own
now, drifting the fence-line out of range.

We got the old Ford hood,
his sled for newborns or stillborns,
and hauled that calf to the barn.
At first, the poor cow just stood

there bellowing while Leon gave
her son a brisk towel
rubdown, trying to save
him from the cold, but then all

at once, she tore wild-eyed
back to end up nursing
that black bullcalf who defied
the Lord himself, said Leon, by living.