**A Wicked, Blasted Wind**

A wicked, blasted wind, a breath of ice

That twists my ears, smears my eyes and slaps my ass.

The kind of weather where nature growls and takes a bite.

I open my farmhouse door

To tend to cows and just born calves

And listen to my god awful dog who barks at possums

Hiding on a branch.

My wife awakes at six to start the pancakes,

And Cream Of Wheat for the kids,

Then get them on the bus at 5 and J.

I’ll be in the barn with the skin on my fingers

Cracked and bleeding from the work and cold.

But this minute, before I step too far away from the warmth at my door,

I look into the tree line beyond my sight,

The snow between the blackish trunks and prairie grasses.

A starkness pounds my chest

And maybe it’s that first breath of ice.

I know life at the last is solitary because death is solitary

And it’s the cold that told me.

It’s life as needs a hand –

Not the lack of hope that runs on and on –

Like the calf that begs to be born,

So much so she’s pushing a hoof into

Her mother’s bleedingvulva and I can’t see to do it right.

I lean forward against its push

To ease the birth and help the calf and its mother

And wonder if death could be best.

I strain to pull her free, like she was my own,

And feel my elbow snap

With a flash of pain that only this blast of wind could succeed.

With a cry I raise my eyes beyond the barn and door,

And see an eagle gain her wings against the sky,

I swear there’s life as I wait for the calf to breathe

I swear once again for me because life is hard and it hurts

And I question, what’s it worth.

But my kids get on the bus and in my pain,

I strive again against the wind,

And all the doubt that life can bring.