Small Exile

Laura Ring, University of Chicago

This poem first appeared in *Stirring*, volume 21 edition 4 (Fall 2019). Reproduced here by permission of the author.

Keywords: Poetry, Chicago.

Chicago when I picture you it is always winter – your dark heart improbably pumping under the whitewashed roads, thick and slow as sleep.

Lakeside the waves have frozen into cryptic gestures – but of welcome or forbiddance who can say? The storefronts diorama quiet – even the tables have put their feet up.

In that hour between snowstorm & salttruck, when you wear December like a delicate shawl, you hold your gloved hand out as to an unfamiliar dog –

some far-born beast, made secretive & wild by glass & steel; lost to the pack & hunched in your rabbited corners.

& so you affect disinterest, as if standing shoulder to shoulder, looking out through the wrong sides of door signs, everything backwards,

the OPENs, the CLOSEDs, the neon Santas chanting OH OH OH –

O City.

Learning to love you is like inventing a religion: All the good sacraments are taken yet the broken still arrive.

I was the iron of unlit lampposts & you wrapped your skein of tiny lights around me just so the snow small exile

© 2021 Ring

could watch itself fall.

This open access article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Ring, Laura. "Small Exile." *In Honor of Sandra Levy*, edited by Susan J. Martin. Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2021, 96. https://openjournals.lib.uchicago.edu/index.php/slevy