

## The Forests Nearby

My father plows the neighbors' driveway  
in his last standing hours,  
the machine blasting frozen wings  
that could lift him into the liberty of blizzard.

Under his winter coat and vest  
the bulge of the Dilaudid drip is invisible  
as is the port in his shoulder where the hospice  
people push palliatives, diligent as my father

blasting snow from someone else's walk.  
He marches grim, the march of a man  
behind a machine fighting a winter  
whose spring he will never feel,

whose warmth will touch only his ashes.  
He knows this. Yet still he pushes,  
clearing a path where the wet flakes  
have stacked, making a way of a barrier.

In my version of his labor my father  
escapes like the herons and the egrets  
he watched in the forests nearby,  
leaving earth in his own body

if not on his own terms. The motor  
becomes buoyant, the wheels  
capable of friction and traction on air  
though he won't give up the handlebar

beneath his gloves, his stubborn frame  
carried away by his snowplow,  
legs scissoring the winds, shouting  
*the driveway isn't done yet*

on his way to a padded landing:  
treetops, twig beds, nest place.  
He perches in the ice-encased branches  
of some birch or white oak

sulking til the thaw and the footsteps  
of his family, come to coo him down  
from his frozen exile.