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Rotten Ice

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Rotten Ice
Stolen from ludo lul'evich Surhasko

I stay near the edge even now,
I never loved the risk
of temporary winter bridges.

I didn't know him well, only knew
that he was the favorite son,
the favorite grandchild, smallest
smile in the family photograph.
What was he doing, calling the fishes?

One of those men's games boys will imitate
until they learn the import of their weight.

Today I wait to see:
after the rain, the ice breaks up
into flutes, into icicles, and falls
in tiny armies into deeper water,
as wind lifts the cold from the lake
and takes it up the street
into the city. Breathe death, all of you
who walk there, praying for spring.

As the ice dies it chatters "Nick Nick Nick!"
in crystal sugar voices, as my aunt
sings out to his lost body to float home.