

# Transfigurations

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [November 15, 2011](#) issue

—*Bow River, Alberta*

The rowdy gulls—derisive creatures,  
their yammer an instantaneous flash point of anger  
for you. Escaped, your mammoth trout, for which  
you'd traveled here, the fish  
you'd drawn so close that each haloed spot  
showed clear, though the river was murky, its surface pocked  
by storm. The feral you of your youth returned,  
as if he'd never been gone—  
which he hadn't. Incredibly, it appeared  
to you, a man in his sixties, that what endured  
of life would come to nothing. Your brother rocked  
in the bow of the boat. He'd caught  
a trophy minutes before, and released it.  
He teased you and, incredibly, in that instant  
he seemed an enemy. What madness was *that*?

Then reason came back:  
you weighed such insignificant loss  
against the loss of loved ones to age or disease.

You considered a fish you would have freed against  
the elegant downstream bend  
in the river, at which a pair of eagles  
teetered on spruce limbs, tails and heads essential  
illustrations of whiteness. And in that moment  
you missed your wife, your grownup

children, a grandchild who shares the games  
she invents for you, the smaller and younger twins  
waiting their turns, you could hope, to do the same.

Ineffable changes came  
along with an effortless, dawdling gesture of snow,  
through which the sun now maundered down to the flow.

Your trout was already cached in memory's vaults.  
The squalling gulls showed angel-pale.  
You turned and smiled at your brother. He smiled.

And all was well. And all was well.