

Distance

(Roger Lundin 1949-2015)

by [Miho Nonaka](#) in the [April 26, 2017](#) issue

Snow started overnight, unexpectedly, in abundance
making the drive to church beautiful, nearly
impossible. And it would continue through the service—
high windows like a slender book opened
in the middle, pages growing whiter, emptier
save for a few bones of the tree
on the margin.

 Your body
already bare, severe space
of reformed architecture: a lone vessel
breaking its path through the hush
of human breath to the center, the unknown.

That summer, a poem had started us discussing
flies, a sudden legion of them in my kitchen.
It amused you to no end to picture me
swatting at them with dark passion,
tallying my victories each day until
my husband finally located their colony.

What flies, invisible, interpose between words,
splinter the syntax of eulogy?

 Uncertain, stumbling, we
turn to music, hymns, prayers. As if the soul
is a kind of distance, measured around and still beyond
circumference. We ache to feel exactly
what our fragile faith tells us we can't

but must.

Inside your head was a library
of unfinished books. An entire forest of them gone
before the first snow. Your voice haunts me, tender,
elegiac at the core, calling to the dead, your
scattered tribe, a maze of jagged isles, high winds
through the fog of the Baltic Sea.

There was a time I thought that words, when
true, would crystallize in their arrival.

I believed that.

It is such a long journey, Sue said
at a late night grocery store. We were pushing carts full
of essentials when we ran into each other
under the fluorescent light.

I had no words for her. We are still

standing in that spacious church
surrounded by silent crystals. Dusk
gathers, the ceiling grows higher, and the whole
building is an instrument full of air, aching to
house the complete sufficiency of grace.