

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.