

A Letter Sent in Midsummer in Reply to a Photograph Taken in Midwinter Much Farther North

For Lynne

SO MUCH rain has fallen across this dry land these past two months—including here in the bland back pocket of it I occupy a long way south of east—that my old black suede cowboy boots, veterans of my middle years, have grown mouldy in the wardrobe. And that seems a fitting metaphor for the condition of one's soul.

But this morning, I took the brush to the boots, and they came up fine, and the sky has relented and paid forward a little sunlight, in which I sit, on the balcony, catching up on some reading and some writing and learning to breathe both in and out again. And I want to tell you that the photograph you've sent me—a merganser on a shining winter pond—is a picture of where I'd like to be and how I'd like to feel; let's call it a proxy for the work in progress that is my health. I am about where that duck is at, afloat in the thick of the relentless kindness of an afternoon in winter and feeling pretty good about it.

But that's a thing
I think you knew when you let your shutter fall, and you heard the reeds rattle,
like some kind of thirsty chorus line, in behind the pond, which shone like obsidian
in the high desert light.