

SANDRA KOHLER

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Winter Love Poem

A coating of snow ices the alley below  
the garden, the sidewalks I'd walk going  
to the river. A cardinal appears and vanishes  
on the porch floor, ground feeder, scarlet flash  
in the white. On the eve of our twenty-eighth  
anniversary, I'm able to imagine making friends  
with my death but not yours. You're worried  
about whether you'll live to your eightieth  
birthday in March, the one your father missed  
reaching. Is planning next fall's trip to Greece  
a way of talking yourself past this corner?  
One of my selves is looking forward to life,  
one to death, one does nothing but write  
poems, one wants and takes pleasure.  
I am spendthrift, letting riches fall through  
my fingers, minutes, hours. A friend says  
she's sure there's something she ought to  
learn caring for her dying in-laws, but what,  
it changes daily—except that everything  
is transitory, which she knew already. Do  
we ever know it? Do we know anything  
else? In yesterday's freeze we set out two  
new feeders and a male cardinal comes  
to the red dogwood, brighter than its leaves  
in October, one bloom. This morning,  
the snowy yard's quiet, no one's going  
anywhere in the Sunday hush, the white  
mute world. And me? I'm going to make  
coffee, make love, read the papers; I'm  
going to Greece, to live, to die. I'm  
going to love you for how many  
years more of your life, or mine?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sandra Kohler is the author of *The Country of Women* (CALYX Books 1995), *The Ceremonies of Longing* (University of Pittsburgh Press 2003), and *Improbable Music* (WordTech Communications 2011). Her work has also appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The New Republic*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Beloit Poetry Journal*. A part-time teacher of adult education courses, she lives in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

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