

Outdoor Ed.

I was a young eleven and he eleven too when
we saw a mouse frozen atop a block of ice smiling

because it liked the snow and Pine Mountain,
Kentucky and I thought he was only

sleeping, but Robert stooped down still to find
the mouse heart quiet, dead and so he laughed

a small silent laugh like a bear skimming a stream
and waiting in a wood; only he didn't know

how the bear might catch a crawdad and small
trout as ice twined around a red beating

heart in a rodent that ate berries and a few
flowers, like ones in vases he arranges on

late nights in the distant future, before a car
speeding down the highway strikes him just so:

arranging lilacs, roses, morning glories, on
a street corner he once said that he *never wants*

to leave, like small mice burrow and bears hibernate,
awakening from snow midwinter, hoping

they won't freeze; he got his wish, a happy accident
like scat from deer that the bluegrass buries,

or square dances we count by fours, and call in
rhyme and reels in short swing, harmonica

symphonies we have been humming,
Appalachian tunes like "Blue Kentucky

Blues" we sang because we could at eleven,
walking in the woods laughing at small death.