Back to School

Jeannie C. Riley

Wintertime comes early to the north part of this state
I walk along the river where we used to come and skate
The trees're now all gone and by the river there's a sign
Trespassin' is a twenty dollar fine
Lookin' up the road toward the schoolhouse on the hill
That thing about an empty building causes me to chill
My memory goes back to when the teacher rang the bell
The day she sent you home for saying hell
Walkin' past the building so important in my past
The road is full of ol' discarded bottles and some trash
I step behind the building as I shelter from the cold
I see our names in letters big and boldMy fingers trace the letters of a work of art alone
And I recall the day that you carved it in a stone
Somehow I can see you now with books and coat in hand
You always waved as down the hill you ran
Cokes were just a nickel then and many were the times
The two of us would sip them as if they were village wine
And then on Graduation Day we bought the little ring
And said that carats didn't mean a thing
Now I retrace my footsteps to the cab that waits for me
Looking back to see our names you carved upon a tree
The driver says I look familiar asks me what's my name
I say hurry I have to catch a plane

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