When the promise of evergreen haunts us

We are good at keeping other people’s secrets, but not our own;
They spill out sticky and unruly, a choking phlegm
Every illness of winter told us to keep our jackets on.
Easier if thoughts beaded on our skin like sweat,
If words wavered in a wall of heat,
Easier still if we were not secrets at all.

Somewhere in Norway they keep prisoners
In tiny cabins tucked away under snow, two murderers
Making the same bed, hands smoothing over stainless sheets.

If we bought a house far enough north to be a folk legend;
If I wrote lines that rolled on down into the valley with snow;
If you opened the windows every evening
To let out the smell of chimney smoke
Would January be cold enough for our hearts to feel warm again?

Would the hurt ride out with the fog in the mornings,
Would all the wrong parts of us flake off like tree bark,
Would my teeth on your skin dissolve into sugar syrup and cold air?

Dangerous to think things would be easier
If only we could take our hands and cut wood instead
We are good at pretending to be gentle; we cannot tell a gentle lie.