

PROMISES KEPT by JOHN PHILLIPS

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The crescent moon, slender and delicate,
That earlier graced the pre-dawn east
Has slipped behind a layer of clouds
Ushered in upon a system from the west.

The clouds are laden with a quiet snow,
That whitens slowly the open field,
Bordered by a cedar fence long silvered with age
That marks the boundary of my land.

The field between the fence and home is vacant
Save a solitary hawk,
Resolutely perched atop a post,
To contemplate, like me, this morning snow.

It's December, my December.
The days are short,
And time is fleeting, finite, and fragile
And all the more precious for that.

So my chores will wait
While I observe this snow
And consider the solitude
That by her death has come to frame my life.

The snow leads me to recall the promises
That she and I together made
Those many years before
And the life that we had shared.

It draws me as well to reflect upon
The promises more recent
That, because she no longer could,
Required me alone to make on her behalf—

And keep.