

Blood Sugar and Conception of March

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Blood Sugar

Sean Prentiss

During the primaveral season,
our sugar maples share
a gift of sugar-water, which appears
mere magic from the veins
of this place but is actually
a mystic bundled process of
chemistry and physics.

Last summer, these maples
converted sun to sucrose
as we humans convert
language to song.

Once their autumn leaves tumbled
to forest's floor, all residual sap
was warehoused in each tree's rays,
harbored till spring's revival.

Then during the freeze-thaw
cycle, when nights plummet
but days offer

warm spring winds,
we trudge knee-deep snow to drill
two inches into each maple.

We hammer till spouts hold tight
into acer wood.

We festoon buckets from each spout.

During this freeze-thaw cycle,
internal pressure forces sap
from sapwood.
Plunk plunk plunk—sap tumbles
into ancient galvanized buckets.
A song of reawakened woods,
a herald to soon-to-return songbirds.
A drop at a time, sugar water
gathers in buckets, we pray
toward overflow.
A drop at a time,
yawping out in their own language.
Each afternoon, when chilled weather
leads to suction and silence,
it is then that we heave
sap water to our deck, ignite
our propane stove, and place
buckets above fire.
Soon, pots share up steam to an evening air,
a gift to cold nights.
Over the burn, nature's divinity
turns forty gallons of maple sap
into one gallon of syrup.
As dusk soaks the sky,
as Solstice Mountain dims, we dip
spoons into the boil
to taste what blood-sugar
our trees provide,

and it tastes of earth, of sweet,
of tree, of roots sunk
deep within the soil
of home.



Image: Richard Henry Hingston, "Sap Buckets," © 2017. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

Conception of March

Sean Prentiss

For unborn Acorn.

Those monogamous screech owls
perch beside each other on
pine branches. The male performing
an elaborate dance—a lifting of wings, a prostration
before her, a bringing of food. The female, too,
dances—jumping and bowing
again, again.

A ruffed grouse drums air beneath
his wings, reverberating a percussion
through our woods, a music to a mate.

From the branches
of our alders, mourning
doves coo to forever partners.

The male returns
to the female with alms of
grass, needles, bits of branches.

The female constructs
a nest where together they will perch
upon eggs.

The brown slink and hop
of the male mink travels far to reach
Solstice Lake females.

Maybe, Sarah, we will spot their tracks
in the lake's muddy shoreline. Let us
lean in close
and examine the prints. Let us gaze
to the branches of the trees
to learn from this coupling
world around us.

March is a season of nesting,
of conception.

We, too, are animals. We, too,
must use this season
to create.

Let us too court.

I will fetch you morning tea.

You may lounge your sleepy head upon
my shoulder. I will lose
my fingers into your wilderness
of hair.