AN EARLY START IN MIDWINTER

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The freeze is on. At six a scattering

of sickly lights shine pale in kitchen windows.

Thermostats are adjusted. Furnaces

blast on with a whoosh. And day

rumbles up out of cellars to the tune

of bacon spitting in a greasy pan.

Scrape your nail along the window-pane,

shave off a curl of frost. Or press your thumb

against the film of white to melt an eye

onto the fire escape. All night

pipes ticked and grumbled like sore bones.

The tap runs rust over your chapped hands.

Sweep last night's toast-crumbs off the tablecloth.

Puncture your egg-yolk with a prong of fork

so gold runs over the white. And sip

your coffee scalding hot. The radio

says you are out ahead, with time to spare.

Your clothes are waiting folded on the chair.

This is your hour to dream. The radio

says that the freeze is on, and may go on

weeks without end. You barely hear the warning.

Dreaming of orange and red, the hot-tongued flowers

that winter sunrise mimics, you go out

in the dark. And zero floats you into morning.