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How Many Winters

How many winters, how many Februaries
have stayed dormant, have hoped to shudder
with contact when red swells commercial and
fat. The month never serves you a plate. You are
not even invited to leftovers. The guests are gone.

You hear that spring offers other invitations. Aprils
sprout and bloom, so you remind yourself not to fret
and insist that every set of spread petals is frankly
not for you. You appreciate some roses and lilacs
from a distance, yet you keep bustling and hurry
from one task to the next, shuffling and moving on
with talk of being busy, while dreaming of summer.

Warmth always seems elusive. Chicago is
known for long winters. A hat and coat are a
simple start to face the nights of frigid, hard
winds. See what smooths out the irregular
edges of chills and find the unshaken ridge
where someone might face a cool October
when longing stretches its thread and looks
like a solitary, stone bench in a park far away.

I Can See in Color

after Mary J. Blige

When the hell inside your head breaks, you see the soot
wiped away from the window of your life where dull
gives way to sunlight, green, rain slickers, and bright boots.
The leaded grief, the tonnage depression brings, so you cull

this pallor
for color.

Ain't Really Love
after Mary J. Blige

That moment when a woman drops her chin and shakes her head
and all that cold seeps from his words, comes icy out his mouth,
lets you know how the house been crumbling. The peeling paint, lead.
He's wrecking ball crushing the rubble in this last bout—

a demolition
she shunned.