



## LORETTA DIANE WALKER

### *BREAKING THE ICE*

*We cannot speak of him—the weather remains a safe topic,  
fills empty beats of silence so we don't have to reveal ourselves.*

Winter's early morning light drips  
from the bare branches  
of a chinaberry tree.

Streamers of toilet paper are interlopers  
in my neighbor's yard,  
waving where leaves normally shake  
under the wind's nervous hands.

Some child thought this prank funny.  
Maybe fate smiled at us, too?  
The way she brought us together.

The church where we gather has a gloomy face.  
Neither light nor trees can change its disposition.  
Perhaps the black hearse parked outside  
highjacked its joy.

Linked by blood and shock,  
we meet for the first time.  
Grief clogs the air while we look for him  
in each other's faces.  
Our names are listed like royalty in the obituary,  
written as though we grew together.