

Transfigurations

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [November 15, 2011](#) issue

—*Bow River, Alberta*

The rowdy gulls—derisive creatures,
their yammer an instantaneous flash point of anger
for you. Escaped, your mammoth trout, for which

you'd traveled here, the fish
you'd drawn so close that each haloed spot
showed clear, though the river was murky, its surface pocked

by storm. The feral you of your youth returned,
as if he'd never been gone—
which he hadn't. Incredibly, it appeared

to you, a man in his sixties, that what endured
of life would come to nothing. Your brother rocked
in the bow of the boat. He'd caught

a trophy minutes before, and released it.
He teased you and, incredibly, in that instant
he seemed an enemy. What madness was *that*?

Then reason came back:
you weighed such insignificant loss
against the loss of loved ones to age or disease.

You considered a fish you would have freed against
the elegant downstream bend
in the river, at which a pair of eagles

teetered on spruce limbs, tails and heads essential
illustrations of whiteness. And in that moment
you missed your wife, your grownup

children, a grandchild who shares the games
she invents for you, the smaller and younger twins
waiting their turns, you could hope, to do the same.

Ineffable changes came
along with an effortless, dawdling gesture of snow,
through which the sun now maundered down to the flow.

Your trout was already cached in memory's vaults.
The squalling gulls showed angel-pale.
You turned and smiled at your brother. He smiled.

And all was well. And all was well.