

Cold day in the provinces

by [Jeff Gundy](#) in the [November 8, 2017](#) issue

*"I have hardened my heart only a little."*

—Robinson Jeffers

The zipper of my down coat snagged for the umpteenth time.

Somehow the fabric never tears.

Three sets of tracks beaten in between the classrooms and Old Ropp.

The former governor says her son's PTSD is the president's fault.

Now that I'm looking, I hear the chittering of birds everywhere.

Tree broken twenty feet up, a crooked upside-down V, snow brilliant on the  
slanting trunk.

A spokesperson describes recent acts by a foreign government as a) "a blatant  
and unacceptable breach of the most fundamental tenets of civilized  
behavior," and b) not a surprise.

Icicles dangle from the bumpers of the students' cars.

Another governor says he'll pray for the kids with their blood full of lead, and  
that he feels terrible, and that it wasn't his fault.

A sparrow perches on the No Parking sign.

"Creative maladjustment" is the phrase of the week.

The sycamore, snow in its high branches, a revelation in white and gray and  
three more grays.

—for Sarah Thompson