

## Life History

1

He finds his sister's glove  
among the bootprints in  
a snowdrift near the wood.

2

He takes it with him when  
he hikes across the mountains,  
begging bread from strangers.

3

A new identity  
he never quite gets used to  
acquaints itself with others.

4

He takes to languages  
like landscapes: in each  
a job, a girl, a question.

5

When he crosses the ocean  
he watches herring gulls  
competing for his wake.

6

The woman who becomes  
his wife and bears him sons  
(no daughter) brings him luck.

7

The hands he labours to  
keep occupied attempt  
a kind of tenderness.

8

He takes no interest  
in politics, but sport  
absorbs the idle hours.

9

He examines a face  
in the mirror, no longer  
his sister's younger brother.

10

He sings his granddaughter  
a foreign song, but stops  
when she bursts into tears.

11

Woken by explosions  
when the century ends,  
he takes a sleeping pill.

12

With nothing left of what  
he once imagined all  
there was, he wants for nothing.

*Gregory Woods*

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*This poem and the one by A C Clarke are from **Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for those seeking refuge**, edited by Kathleen Bell, Emma Lee and Siobhan Logan, published by Five Leaves, £9.99. Proceeds support Leicester City of Sanctuary, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum, and Médecins sans Frontières. At about the time this collection appeared in December 2015, Nottingham was formally recognised as a UNESCO City of Literature, one of 20 in the world. Comprising work from poets who mostly live in the English East Midlands, this volume reflects an internationalist approach in keeping with UNESCO's purpose of encouraging international peace and universal respect for human rights by promoting collaboration among nations.*

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