

# The Last Wolverine

by James Dickey

They will soon be down.

To one, but he still will be  
For a little while still will be stopping

The flakes in the air with a look,  
Surrounding himself with the silence  
Of whitening snarls. Let him eat  
The last red meal of the condemned

To extinction, tearing the guts

From an elk. Yet that is not enough  
For me. I would have him eat

The heart, and, from it, have an idea  
Stream into his gnawing head  
That he no longer has a thing  
To lose, and so can walk

Out into the open, in the full

Pale of the sub-Arctic sun  
Where a single spruce tree is dying

Higher and higher. Let him climb it  
With all his meanness and strength.  
Lord, we have come to the end  
Of this kind of vision of heaven,

As the sky breaks open

Its fans around him and shimmers  
And into its northern gates he rises

Snarling complete in the joy of a weasel  
With an elk's horned heart in his stomach

Looking straight into the eternal  
Blue, where he hauls his kind. I would have it all

My way: at the top of that tree I place

The New World's last eagle  
Hunched in mangy feathers giving

Up on the theory of flight.  
Dear God of the wildness of poetry, let them mate  
To the death in the rotten branches,  
Let the tree sway and burst into flame

And mingle them, crackling with feathers,

In crownfire. Let something come  
Of it something gigantic legendary

Rise beyond reason over hills  
Of ice SCREAMING that it cannot die,  
That it has come back, this time  
On wings, and will spare no earthly thing:

That it will hover, made purely of northern

Lights, at dusk and fall  
On men building roads: will perch

On the moose's horn like a falcon  
Riding into battle into holy war against  
Screaming railroad crews: will pull  
Whole traplines like fibers from the snow

In the long-jawed night of fur trappers.

But, small, filthy, unwinged,  
You will soon be crouching

Alone, with maybe some dim racial notion  
Of being the last, but none of how much  
Your unnoticed going will mean:  
How much the timid poem needs

The mindless explosion of your rage,

The glutton's internal fire the elk's  
Heart in the belly, sprouting wings,

The pact of the 'blind swallowing  
Thing,' with himself, to eat  
The world, and not to be driven off it  
Until it is gone, even if it takes

Forever. I take you as you are

And make of you what I will,  
Skunk-bear, carcajou, bloodthirsty

Non-survivor.

Lord, let me die but not die  
Out.