

Two poems by Rowan Middleton published in *New View* (2022). Note: 'Woodman' was previously published in *The Stolen Herd* by Rowan Middleton (Stroud: Yew Tree Press, 2018).

Meditation

Imagine standing like a heron
at the edge of a lake,
watching blue-green stillness.

Sedge crowds the shoreline.
Tangled alder branches
recede into mist.

If you stretch those great wings
you can glide over water
and enter the soft December sky.

Woodman

He sits by a rusting baler in a dark field
with sheep like ghosts and cold that clamps the thistle
in ice, sharpens the star above the wood.

He looks across the valley, where the pub spills
winking light, then turns to the trees and waits
with fox and deer, ears pricked for wings.

The owl senses it first.
It echoes in the stones, sings in the buried seed
reaches even the woodman's knotted core.

Light eases into the chill world.
The farmer putters round, pitching out
to steaming sheep that stamp the hard ground.

The sun touches the woodman's lumps and cracks.
He feels the frost melt on his bark jacket.