

## Al Basile

### An Ordinary Story

It's a time-honored, celebrated tale  
from my hometown: how long ago a wagon  
barreled up with whiskey sought a short  
cut across Kenoza Lake late in  
a winter milder than its predecessors.

Out over the expanse, the surface groaned,  
cracked, and gave way as the hooves punched through,  
and soon the horses, wagon, driver, barrels,  
slipped down into the frigid depths, all lost,  
except for a faint whiskey tinge that lingered  
on thereafter, sweetening the water.

With my new skates in hand one winter day,  
I politicked to lift the skating ban  
my father had imposed on city lakes.  
Responsible for parks and recreation,  
he'd sent out a man to take a boring.  
'Three inches is enough,' I said, 'I read it  
in the almanac.' He was unmoved.  
'Five inches,' was his answer, and my skate  
blades went untested for another week.

The man who drove that team became a legend;  
his rash choice sniffed a bit like heroism.  
My father didn't lend himself to folk tales.  
Because they didn't happen, stories of  
those heedless boys who broke through three-inch ice  
still go untold, and boys like me live on.  
It's in the absence of such accidents  
my father's rectitude sweetens the world,  
streaming from its ordinary depths.