

## Jemez Hot Springs on a Winter Night

Lori McKellar

We hike through darkness, treading the well-worn path.  
By day, not easily missed; by night, treacherous ice

forms, coating roots of ponderosa pine. Granite  
and limestone footholds, embedded fossils worn smooth

by the feet of wanderers, glisten with snow. Igneous rock  
forms a looming backdrop for the wine coolers you carry.

Upward, winding through juniper and scrub oak, the trail  
carries us higher. Log bridge with one railing,

the only way across the half-crystalline river. Dim  
flashlights illuminate our path. A distant voice calls

as we ascend, slipping on moss-covered rocks.  
Soon, footfalls in frozen mud, the only sound.

We arrive at a clearing, slightly sulphurous haze  
warming the chill air. Senses heightened,

you lead me forward, reassuring me of the dark.  
A private place, the lower spring, volcanic water

warming my frozen limbs. Our visible breath  
forming a halo around the full moon,

you taught me how to find Orion.