1979

Winter, 1977: Messages from Upstate N.Y. to a Friend

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For Michael Clemens

January: thirty below and I want to be able to say that I'm not worried that the cold gets easier to bear that these huge and anonymous drifts by the road are less real than my house what it holds lamp chair book cup me by this window just now

blue spruce on the hill disappeared in a mist of snow became cloud and I wonder what's next even the dogs won't go out but sleep where I can see them it's this manical whiteness smooth and unblemished there's nothing it won't uncolor so here I am falling in love with what's rough or imperfect this remarkable dent in my stove the oak floor I stand on repeating what's written in day-glo green on my postbox side: Djanikian

RD 1. Proof enough I'm still holding my ground.

— Gregory Djanikian

Naming the Wildflowers

For Carol and Ken

Ineptly we've been at it, the three of us, mistcounting leaves and sepals, mixing up stems, but somehow we've come through with the right names: fleabane, hawkweed, bedstraw, and blue-eyed grass— those marvelous words that Adam must have mouthed, stilling each petal as he spoke; or if not Adam, then some old farmer suddenly turned poet describing to his wife what he'd just unearthed by his own garden. Now we've discovered them, and come next summer, sure and smooth-voiced with a winter's worth of singing, we'll pass them on to others so they, too, might know what we exist among. It's a vow we'll make good later. Today, we're stumbling on new ground, full-throated, too alive with each name!

— Gregory Djanikian

Published by SURFACE, 1979