Crossing the Center Line

by Bill Yarrow

He was a Decembrist but he was not
one of the hanged. They dragged his
frozen bones to Magadan where he
toiled in the ruined mines. More than
fresh air, he longed for glimpses of the
speckled light that sparkled off the sea.
He was used to the moldy smell of gold
ore and the whiskey whispers of his
comrades in hell. But he never adjusted
to the crisp loss of Ludmilla to scarlet fever.
And the white nightmares never left him.
One day, he got a letter from his brother.
Their mother had died in a suspicious fire.
He lit a cigarette and filled his shrunken lungs.

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