

# 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.

