

## Blood Sugar and Conception of March

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[See table of contents](#)

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# Blood Sugar

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*Sean Prentiss*

During the primaveral season,  
our sugar maples share  
a gift of sugar-water, which appears  
mere magic from the veins  
of this place but is actually  
a mystic bundled process of  
chemistry and physics.

Last summer, these maples  
converted sun to sucrose  
as we humans convert  
language to song.

Once their autumn leaves tumbled  
to forest's floor, all residual sap  
was warehoused in each tree's rays,  
harbored till spring's revival.

Then during the freeze-thaw  
cycle, when nights plummet  
but days offer

warm spring winds,  
we trudge knee-deep snow to drill  
two inches into each maple.

We hammer till spouts hold tight  
into acer wood.

We festoon buckets from each spout.

During this freeze-thaw cycle,  
internal pressure forces sap  
from sapwood.  
Plunk plunk plunk—sap tumbles  
into ancient galvanized buckets.  
A song of reawakened woods,  
a herald to soon-to-return songbirds.  
A drop at a time, sugar water  
gathers in buckets, we pray  
toward overflow.  
A drop at a time,  
yawping out in their own language.  
Each afternoon, when chilled weather  
leads to suction and silence,  
it is then that we heave  
sap water to our deck, ignite  
our propane stove, and place  
buckets above fire.  
Soon, pots share up steam to an evening air,  
a gift to cold nights.  
Over the burn, nature's divinity  
turns forty gallons of maple sap  
into one gallon of syrup.  
As dusk soaks the sky,  
as Solstice Mountain dims, we dip  
spoons into the boil  
to taste what blood-sugar  
our trees provide,

and it tastes of earth, of sweet,  
of tree, of roots sunk  
deep within the soil  
of home.



Image: Richard Henry Hingston, "Sap Buckets," © 2017. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

# Conception of March

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*Sean Prentiss*

For unborn Acorn.

Those monogamous screech owls  
perch beside each other on  
pine branches. The male performing  
an elaborate dance—a lifting of wings, a prostration  
before her, a bringing of food. The female, too,  
dances—jumping and bowing  
again, again.

A ruffed grouse drums air beneath  
his wings, reverberating a percussion  
through our woods, a music to a mate.

From the branches  
of our alders, mourning  
doves coo to forever partners.

The male returns  
to the female with alms of  
grass, needles, bits of branches.

The female constructs  
a nest where together they will perch  
upon eggs.

The brown slink and hop  
of the male mink travels far to reach  
Solstice Lake females.

Maybe, Sarah, we will spot their tracks  
in the lake's muddy shoreline. Let us  
lean in close  
and examine the prints. Let us gaze  
to the branches of the trees  
to learn from this coupling  
world around us.

March is a season of nesting,  
of conception.

We, too, are animals. We, too,  
must use this season  
to create.

Let us too court.

I will fetch you morning tea.

You may lounge your sleepy head upon  
my shoulder. I will lose  
my fingers into your wilderness  
of hair.