

Norwegian Krone, 1891

My grandfather once gave me a silver coin
worth two *ore*. On one side, a rampant lion,
crowned, and on the back, the number two,
encircled by a wreath of linden leaves.

I carried this coin in my pocket every day,
going out and coming in, while playing,
reading in the town library,
waxing my skis, or meeting classmates to sing

every evening in the pine-ringed square.
I would slide my hand down to feel its rigid
edges, its markings raised in relief.
It smelled of his tobacco, his cologne.

It never slipped out, even as I hung, upside
down, in the tree I'd climbed, swaying
in the breeze off the fjord, nor when leaping
from rock to rock below the jagged cliffs.

The year stamped on its face was 1891,
the year of his birth. I give this coin now
to you, wrapped in purple tissue paper,
tied with an orange ribbon. As you move

about, as this coin jangles with its mates,
rubbing themselves smooth and shiny,
think of me. Touch its gleaming surface.
Finger its impressions. Keep it safe.