

*Kate Daniels*

## Grandmother, I'm Reading Tolstoy

In the long nights up north,  
I've been reading Tolstoy and marveling  
at how he knew what everyone  
was thinking and even how they felt.  
So many people inside him!  
A whole city growing and sleeping  
and being born. He was a kind master  
knowing exactly what everyone wanted  
and loving them for it, no matter what.

I can't begin to imagine how you feel.

In the world I live in it's hard enough  
to know / hurt when a man on the street  
strokes my thigh with his long finger,  
or that I marvel at the one-legged woman  
hopping and pushing her bike through the park.

You've become something like a golden haystack  
so big I couldn't gather it in my arms  
if I tried.

I suppose I would like to know  
you think it was worth it.

The sunsets up here are unusually painful  
this time of year  
as if someone raked his fingernails  
through a delicate membrane.  
I am reading Tolstoy and trying  
to understand why you would want to die.  
It's a world. All we can do is live  
in it. I don't know. It's hard  
to share your perspective.  
You're at the end of the book.  
I haven't gotten very far.  
For me, it's still an accomplishment  
just to turn over a page.