

## BIG SLIDE

Home a whole summer,  
repair for a decade  
of tiny Christmas times,  
here slowly out come all  
the mislaid stories, relived  
in the long porch loiters  
no telephone call can touch.

*Did I tell you?* starts my sister,  
when in the spring Dad returned  
late one night from the coast.  
A half hour from town found  
the road covered in rock,  
a fresh surge from the slide  
no Highways fix could ever  
stifle. Back to Lytton and around  
Ashcroft, he eventually  
clamoured through the door,  
set a cooler of city groceries  
on the floor and muttered

*Thirty years and that slide finally got me.*

Soon it's become a staple  
in the collective routine,  
and by August he's practically  
hitching his horse to the fence.  
For anyone who'll listen we've got him  
half keeled in the door frame,  
drawling like a Texan.

*Thirty years is pretty good, you know,*  
whenever he feels like rising to the bait.  
*Oh you love it,* one of us will say.  
And why not? Love it.  
Hitch yourself to a place long enough  
for a few of those. To know  
the goings on of river and rock,  
true denizen of canyon and corner,  
and to sometimes find yourself got.

(Still, we'll tell it any time you like.  
The accent's only getting stronger.)