

Extract:

They trudged all day, the boy in silence. By afternoon the slush had melted off the road and by evening it was dry. They didn't stop. How many miles? Ten, twelve. They used to play quoits¹ in the road with four big steel washers they'd found in a hardware store but these were gone with everything else. That night they camped in a ravine and built a fire against a small stone bluff and ate their last tin of food. He'd put it by because it was the boy's favourite, pork and beans. They watched it bubble slowly in the coals and he retrieved the tin with the pliers and they ate in silence. He rinsed the empty tin with water and gave it to the child to drink and that was that. I should have been more careful, he said.

The boy didn't answer.

You have to talk to me.

Okay.