Fall 1983

P.O.W.: In the States

Robert Lietz
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This may take some coaxing,
but see it: the rows of tulips
blindfolded by late season snow,
the pines standing for a country
of lakes that mean hard winters,
meaning more than that.

I struggled up scents
of huskings. The legs of women
turned to fat
to bear the weight they carried.
Today even the dreams punish,
turn a decade up from textbooks,
pungencies men died of,
the lounge whores like sad school-girls
at a pep-rally. Afternoons
I might be manning a steamshovel
or forklift, I listen to music
I missed then. Some word catches
mood, some levity of flatpicked
steel. Clouds smear across thousands
of miles and ten years.

My blood sorts out that
tempting memorabilia. I go out
into the city,
into an afternoon of jackhammers,
of roofers tapping down
new shingles. I want what their
hands mean, building their days
toward evenings love comes home to.
Not this x-ing of purchases
off lists that blank forever
on me, these waitresses, cashiers,
their names on plastic nameplates
pinned to their breast pockets,
these eyes I explain myself to
over daiquiris and after,

that set me
along a too familiar route.