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The Soft World

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THE SOFT WORLD

I walk down the Spruce Street tracks. No lights
line the rail and the miles roll back like stories
from the Sohl Ranch bunk. Dad talks hard
all night. Strange death flashes in the arc lamp—
hucksters, H-bombs, girls. After six nights in Butte
the lamp goes black. Dad I see you

take your lover wading in the creek.
The crow-black chicken pecks your heel and greenish flies
are singing in my ears. No meaty hands have bruised
me in Missoula. You burn the lawn, cursing
my full-length name. The bare dirt road winds down
to Harvet's barn. You sit alone,

the hidden worlds slammed behind
the long stone hills. I think
of the wicked gravestone sunk
in a back lot and your deep voice
like the North Wind roaring down the tracks.