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THE GRATEFUL SHED

BRAD LAMBERT

Thanksgiving Day, 2016

here are the railroad tracks, cross them,
and there is the Yellowstone County line.

although the sign reads NO TRESPASSING,
the barbed wire beckons with fingers curled.

waiting for trains to pass,
to paw at the West,
feet treading on sandstone,
printing animal tracks
into untouched snow,
en route to the Shed.

O' what a haven I know.

but if this is the meadow,
where is the grass?
here is the sandstone
tufted with sage.
burnt sage.
where is the fire?
who burnt the sage, the sage?
who burnt the grass, blasted the stone?
what of the Shed?
where is my lean-to?

charred wood,
a mockery gleaming in the sun,
rusted nails and combusted sandstone.

the washboard basin is no longer empty,
the basin now filled with the soot of the roof
stands alone in the shimmering black,
the greatest of places, forsaken
lean-to, is burnt to the ground.

O' what a haven I knew.

from my points of low being
from the valley it drew me
past the railway tracks,
across summertime meadows,
past sunbathing rattlesnake packs.

from the valley it called me,
from my manic heart's heaving
to the blizzardous humming
of wind whistling through walls,
snowfall drumming
on the corrugated rooftop.

O' here stood a haven I knew.

here was the shack room door
scratched with the words
THE GRATEFUL SHED.

here was the open front,
the range's mouth
where I'd stare into the valley
with the envious eyes of rivers
long since dried, of sandstone
long since eroded.

here was the place
abuzz with stone hornets,
hundreds of whispered ideas.

here was the prairie
where I shall first pray, then breathe.
where I shall first write, then breathe.

here is the shack, ungraciously fallen,
where I buried my head so gratefully,
dug for all that I never deserved,
all that I never received.

O' here lies a haven I knew.

sage: that's for remembrance.
sandstone: that's erosion, not forgetfulness.
shed: that's where the true cowboys go to sleep, write,
where their ghosts drink whiskey
with me and myself, alone at night.
where we perfect the art of self-talking,
consider synonyms for never-letting-go
where gritback Montanan shepherds go to rest
with myself on the basin, drinking from dust.