Spring 1991

Cheyenne: Home, Home on the Plains

David Louter
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1.

The early sun melts the dark filament of horizon, and the fluorescent orange letters of the Cowboy Drive-in Discount Liquors invite you to live a life of men shooting pool, deflecting wind and working the UP coal run to Rawlins, twice a week, to sleep nights lulled by a prostitute’s tapping on your motel door, and to wake to an empty wallet, bottle of rye and pistol, all six nickel plated chambers lonely for action never seen.

2.

The wooden horse gallops all day over the downtown western wear emporium, reminder that 1868 was a good year, cattle grazing in the sage and cowboys dying for a night in town. Silk plants line windows three hundred twenty days in the sun--testament to lingering drought and why the principal business here is defeat of change.

The endless view east bears the heart of America, all the same. Looking at it, you will know what inspired the couple’s leap off the viaduct to the coffin-wide rails of the UP yard.
Without jumping you can hear survivors' words in your beating pulse or in boxcars pulling away in the night: Live. Live. Live. Not because you want to. Because you have to.

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