

CutBank

Volume 1
Issue 36 *CutBank* 36

Article 9

Summer 1991

Puzzle

Kim Barnes

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Barnes, Kim (1991) "Puzzle," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 36 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss36/9>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Puzzle

Like pallbearers, they'd hauled him down the skid road, the woods full of diesel, cedar scent, the fine curses of men bent on another load before dusk. A man broken by the fall of timber, two vertebrae snapped in their lean housing, and months to pawn everything he owned. The cast sat him stiff, armpits to hips, hollow as the Tin Man. Thumping his chest to Merle Haggard, Patsy Cline, the white smoke of Pall Malls filling the kitchen to barroom haze, he pieced together the thousand bits of blue and green. My father logging the hours over the Eiffel Tower, the stoney foreign faces of Mount Rushmore, daisies abloom in some unbelievable meadow of alpenglow. The world laid out before him on a three-by-three table and nowhere to go. I'd watch the puzzle come together, straight edges first, perfect interlocking frame, the center with its final vacancy, the last tulip among hundreds blooming across the table. In the kitchen, beans soaking, the smell of pot roast sweet with smoke, I never missed the man coming home in twilight, shedding sawdust like snow, bringing my mother wild iris, strawberries small as thimbles, bringing in the sharp air, bending easily to kiss us, while outside the world threw its beauty against our windows.