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Drinking the Farm

Daniel Lusk

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Daniel Lusk

Drinking the Farm

Never was a big-bellied river
turned on a town the way
they said: “Swallowed wagons,
horses still harnessed to the crazy
whiffletrees,” and “two goats
rode the shed roof down . . .”

“the railroad trestle buckled at the knees
and disappeared . . .”
with a sigh. No doubt with a sigh.

Picture the faces of the lost,
framed by windows of a train.
They lift their newspapers, their cups,
their children, soundlessly, behind
the glass—my father is there, making the journey
he never made, to war, to music school—rushing
toward a destination in a dream.

Miles south in a rocky glade
a cold stream unravels from a cave
like a tale retold on a summer night
under the chestnut tree in Grandma’s yard
of how a giant whirlpool

ate the farmer and the farmer's wife:
"he raised his axe as if to kill
the thing," and she, "she clutched
her apron, salvaging the morning pick
of eggs."

I have dreamed the river,
sliding underground along its secret
shelves of rock, passing slowly
under the graveyard leaning
in the shadow of the church,

licking the dear shoulderblades and feet
our grandmothers and their sisters washed
before they bade goodbye.