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Blaze King of Montana

David Reimer

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David Reimer

Blaze King of Montana

At four a.m. exhaust fans stir and roar
dust across shop floors. Dark
mornings are work hours but you slept
still when I left, scarcely rustling
sheets as I slipped warm into the cold calm air.

Leather jerkin, gloves and boots smell
not of calfskin but acetylene and metal smoke.
The Lincoln shudders power above my tilted helm.
In the machine's electric throb I hear your
breath heavy between sadness and sleep.
Two years and we can't get it right.

Through visored green-black light flares.
If you could only see me weld,
hear the wand in my hand hiss gas, sputter copper current,
watch me wire weave two three-eighths-inch steel slats
to leave a molten, bonded scar,
a red line fading. I sear across oil
and feel smoke touch your eyes and film your nostrils.

Even through leather heat burns,
and I want you tired from bed beside me.
I dream foolishly of you standing near,

measuring the pallet stack's growth—
parts bound for Boise, Butte, Spokane, Seattle—
admiring the smoothness of the beads,
those silver unions.