P.O.W.: In the States

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P.O.W.: IN THE STATES

This may take some coaxing, but see it: the rows of tulips blindfolded by late season snow, the pines standing for a country of lakes that mean hard winters, meaning more than that.

I struggled up scents of huskings. The legs of women turned to fat to bear the weight they carried. Today even the dreams punish, turn a decade up from textbooks, pungencies men died of, the lounge whores like sad school-girls at a pep-rally. Afternoons I might be manning a steamshovel or forklift, I listen to music I missed then. Some word catches mood, some levity of flatpicked steel. Clouds smear across thousands of miles and ten years.

My blood sorts out that tempting memorabilia. I go out into the city, into an afternoon of jackhammers, of roofers tapping down new shingles. I want what their hands mean, building their days toward evenings love comes home to. Not this x-ing of purchases
off lists that blank forever
on me, these waitresses, cashiers,
their names on plastic nameplates
pinned to their breast pockets,
these eyes I explain myself to
over daiquiris and after,

that set me
along a too familiar route.