

Our Kingdom Lies Beneath

the seed

of my familys red harvest took root
in west pennsylvanian foothills gold
pocket watch great grandfather rudolph
passed down heirloom of suffering
born beneath the brush i carry
with me fingers trace the inscription
and envision dry brown carpet
of seasons past their cry of remembrance
underfoot the only sound he heard
a silent prayer and into the mouth
then darkness surrounds
steals the air from his lips constant
veil of dust sweat makes eyes nose
swollen useless liberation from the wail
of a rusted yellow whistle he returns
to the surface and out of the dirt
yet the soot the shadow of below
remains a gray skin that thickens
and hardens over time as do his lungs

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our kingdom lies beneath

weary men shuffle heavy through metal
maidsville mine gates weighted bleak feet invoke
dust snakes that curl around ankles then settle
as rusted yellow whistle wails lost hope
each wears the uniform of life below
gritty dust lines pockets lunch pail bottle
of weak coffee sandwich of tomato
wrapped in newspaper by his own angel
their bodies form single file lines to ride
into mammoth mouth via coal carton
these dark mens confessions are sanctified
daily industrial communion fasten
whites of gray eyes in smiles and jokes before
they enter foothills of a life ignored

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black maria*

maidsville mine sounds loud
the whistle another bad accident
another roof fall echoes through
town chests tighten and stews
are pulled from stove tops kids
run behind the hearse procession
of innocence on each front stoop
waits the slim shoulders of a wife
hoping it will pass her by praying
the rosary or silent desperate
supplications to heaven
christina is spared as neighbors
take anothers body inside lay
him out try to realign his limbs
so they can clean and dress
him in his finest suit

- a black covered wagon that brought home the bodies of critically injured or dead
mi

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mount pleasant

early november air
hangs heavy slow
each step downstairs
sounds somber truth
hairpins in mouth
hands gather loose black
strands rudy darts past
first one dressed clear
through kitchen view
of back door footprints
left in our daily dusting
of gray blackened broom
sits in the corner still
decide to leave her be
when small boy frame
smiling appears in doorway
shirt a makeshift basket
filled with eggs

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fourteenth street nineteen ninety eight

climbed through a hole in jesses roof to a new world
shadows perched on concrete we witness the soundtrack
of night to day neon stilettos over westside cobblestone
closing clubs exodus of bass and synthetics delivery trucks
rattle up eleventh ave drown out the yellow whistle of pennsylvania
foothills but we rise above the dark gray skin this city hides in