

To A Couple of Hard Rock Miners from Winnemucca: Elisa Carlsen

All the stories I know about Horse are second hand
and told to me by Buffalo, an oiler with long hair
who met him deep in the belly of an open pit
fifty-five miles out Jungo Road at the hard rock, Hycroft mine.

They worked D Crew in the Boneyard on the edge of the Black Rock
chest to chest with the mill rats and powder crew
working the Super 7 Shift, scratching the surface of the earth
to birth the fluorescence of load ore
through a leach field, looking for a spec of gold.

He was pre-med before he was a PM tech
in gray-striped diggers and steel-toed boots
and spent a half-life ascending concentric circles,
anticipating a carefully timed blast.

He preferred to sleep on the Bluebird bus, covered in bug dust,
dreaming about the end of a long change
when he and Buffalo could run in the high desert plains
through the red blush of the sunrise over the peak of Blue Mountain
and exchange their paychecks at the Double SS
for an open tab and a game of pool.

After thirty years of mining, his body has long scars
like rifts in the earth, from bad accidents and beautiful women
who loved him but could not outlive him.
To remember them, he built a keystone pyramid
in the kitchen of his single-wide
stacked one tin can on top of another
and put his heart in the middle.

Elisa Carlsen



Photo by Breck Lee Durham