

Treat's Forge 1912, by Monica Lewis

Treat's ideas are afire in
a field of yellowing grass,
It is cool and August
and he will build his forge beneath
the old farmhouse.

He prepares to heat and hammer,
shoe the horses,
make knives, cremate the frustration
of irrigating sandy soil.

His wife is bustling skirt, cutting board,
kids, dirty footed,
push wooden horses across the floor.
She pauses, breathes them in,
they are many and she is few.

Sweet hay is in the pasture,
Lake Michigan is near,
the cows are hungry.

She exhales an amen for the white pines standing sentinel,
and wipes her hands on a flowered apron
tied tight against her ribs.
Remembering soft kisses on her neck, hand on her thigh,
she pushes a strand of hair behind her ear.

The raspberries will be ripe soon,
the children grown,
the canning will begin and end,
the steaming mason jars lined up in a row.

And what will she do? What will she do
with solitude
wrapped in the silence she's longed for
that stretches acres and miles?

Treat will build his forge
beneath the farmhouse
stoking hissing coals of hellfire, of inspiration.

But first,
an experiment in concrete:

layers of silt and sand cement,
Impenetrable,

a porch, a floor,
to separate himself from her,
to keep the whole dream
from burning down.