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Brooklyn

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BROOKLYN



**BEN
NADLER**

When I was young I made a mockery.
I went down into the city, chased
the underground like it was a golden thing
not something black. I embraced the night
dancing in dark and cavernous clubs.
I slept away the days, sometimes not seeing
more of the sun than the first few rays.

Things changed. There was no event
it was just that I was twenty-six
the party was winding down, I wanted
a couch to sit on.

A buddy got me a job down in Bay Ridge
loading crates off boats and onto trains.
The rails took the freight up to the Fresh Pond Yard
where it was loaded onto longer trains
and sent out across the surface of the country.
My muscles ached, I unloaded many
boxes and acquired a few skills.
I worked hard, but the trains were already
a holdover from another age
and the job didn't last very long.

I took the postal exam, but scored poorly
and lingered low on the hiring list.

I did better on the MTA test
my name came up quick and they made me
a track worker. I went on down. It wasn't
bad work, moving steel around, mostly
maintaining. The tasks were clear.

Eleven years on the job, safe in the union
they made me a night shift supervisor.

When I got off my shift, I'd go see Vera.
She worked nights too, in the hospital
which does not have many windows but is lit
with long fluorescent lights.
I'd come over to her apartment.
She'd be tired. I'd be tired too
and beaten down, but I always managed
to swagger through the door like I wasn't.
I'd take off my dirty clothes, I'd kiss her face.
I'd take a shower and rinse off the tunnel dust.
I'd come into the bedroom. She'd already
be lying down on the bed, I'd come
lay with her.

Our son wasn't born yet when I stepped
on the third rail, only incubating
deep in Vera's womb. I call that living though
as I can't say his life was much different
than mine those three short months we both
lived in the loam.

They say it was an accident. The events
were incidental and stupid. We had finished
cleaning up, and switched the power back on.
I went back to retrieve a bucket and
in doing so slipped. Dumb luck, sure, but
I don't call it an accident.

Nadler: Brooklyn

I always knew we were working against the odds
with a foe like that the odds weren't in my favor.
You attack something for long enough
eventually it attacks you back.
Trespasses are not forgiven.
I do believe electricity
remembers being coal before it was burned.