

LIKE BREAD THE LIGHT

JOE WILKINS

Down there is the bar ditch. The mustard tall as me in places and my hair long as it was then caught up in wild mustard and a few stray burs and bits of driftwood from whenever the last rain was and ruffles and sighs of dried mud and dust when you laid me down on the dirt and gravel and kissed me in the bar ditch.

You were pulling at my t-shirt. The snap of my jeans. My panties. I was thinking I would like you to touch as much of me as needed touching. Which right then was a whole lot. I was thinking but not really thinking. Not like you. In your damn head the way you always were I wondered if you might up and decide it was not a good idea and leave me there. Leave me there in the bar ditch. You didn't. You did one good thing for me. I can say that. God but all those long days hauling hay in the summer sun had roped our arms and umbered our shoulders and necks and strawed our hair. If we were not lovely there in the dust and mustard of the bar ditch then I am telling you it is all for shit. Your wrists the way a river kinks around a rock. Slope and flower of my own breast and I was breathless.

My old mother watching TV in the trailer. Peanuts in a can of Coors. Dinner plate of crushed cigarettes. My father in

Tacoma or Oklahoma or some other gone-the-fuck-away place. It oughtn't to have been any good between us. Young and kindly and dumb as we were. I guess maybe it wasn't. Maybe my old mother was right about you. But even after. When you had gone and given yourself over to your own fears. Those ones you called dreams. When I had decided there was nothing left to do but wreck my stupid self on every mean man I ran up against. Every dry-knuckled, chap-lipped man. Even after.

I tell you this spring the rains came hard and the bar ditch ran like a river and in the culvert a tangle of watersnakes unspooled. I saw one day lifting from the ragweed a heron wide as god. Now I move my hands like this over my hips and feel the wind. Now it is the wind I kiss when I do this with my lips.

I guess I hope a few things for you. A wind to roll in your mouth. On your tongue the iron tang and mud lick of dust. That sometimes you are sad in the middle of the day and go walking along a gravel road and squeeze between your blunt thumb and finger the stems of weeds.

I hope you understand that summer we lived on sunlight. Gnashed like bread the light.

Would you believe it? If I told you it's still in me? That here at the lip of the ditch I fucking shine?