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The Formula

Dennis K. Ross

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The Formula

by Dennis K. Ross

The old whiskey bottle
we found in the trash back of the old barn
held it all:
ketchup and kerosene,
furniture polish, vanilla,
red crepe paper, turpentine.
A map was carefully drawn
black crayon on a paper bag
and the formula hidden to protect its power,
buried under the fence
near the potato field and the goats.
We fought wars over that formula,
broom corn spears and bags of fine Kansas dust
gathered from the dry cracked ground.
The formula was magic we knew,
enough magic to cure momma
from the craziness and repair the car,
enough magic to keep
our Prairie Schooner trailer from the bill-men,
enough magic
to make everything okay again.

