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The Evening News

Mark Sanders

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The Evening News

by Mark Sanders

Sitting down on the front porch step, he laid
the shotgun across his lap like the evening newspaper.
His mindless fingers picked at the stock, at shellac.
He smiled the way he always did—at nothing.

Perhaps it was the sun hidden behind the cedar shelter
like a pheasant cock that made him grin,
its hour pink-purple. Or, the noise of cicadas
just turning on, their gears grinding like an old truck's

or the static of radio warming up to a tune.
Could he know the grin was a mistake,
that his wife, standing there, facing him,
had worn her own perplexed look for fifteen years?

Her face was paralysis. Her tongue a key locked
in its own box. When speech moved,
like an unpropped cord of firewood,
it wasn't what was said, but the amount of it.

Several days, the mailman stuffed the roadside box
with letters and papers. When it could take no more,
he drove into the yard, irked at delay.
There they were: sudden news, headlines.

