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Sharecropper's Wife

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Sharecropper’s Wife

Clay sticks to her shoes
as she plants purple iris
in the thick air
between living and death.
An unwatered rose,
withering on its stalk.
Her days crawl like a snail
on the side of the barn.
Sky broods in shades of gray,
weeps dew diamonds
on her garden.
Married to hard times,
er her money is eggs and cream
traded for sugar and salt.

Yesterdays hang in her closet
of a pale shack with rusty screens
and insect eaten blinds,
palmprints on the windows,
children spread on the land
like blackberry jam.
Conceals her love
beneath a sunbonnet,
stares at an empty mailbox
mouth open for forgiveness.
Despair prowls at her door
like a hungry wolf,
contests her right to exist.
Her man, skilled in nothing
more than dirt,
scatters his seed
on used-up ground.

She walks up the road
making small footprints
on the great emptiness of the plains,
knowing the end of the journey
could be no harder
than the long passage
toward it.

by Jack Rickard