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Kadoka

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KADOKA

by Richard Luftig

In Kadoka, South Dakota, the main business
of town is dying, the worn-out,
flat-front stores huddle and shield
their faces from a constant, yawing wind.

The town lists to railroads, its back
pressed flush to rusted tracks, waiting
for trains that don't come anymore,
not even in dreams.

Out from Kadoka, the ribbon roads
crease black and empty fields,
land so flat you can drop a line
and weight and come up plumb

crazy from the straightness of it all.
Those roads run east to the end
of the town where buildings straggle
and fade into fence posts and winter

wheat, or west, past where the town
used to be, out to the highway lined
with truckstops full of placemats
for Yogi Bear Campgrounds and Badland Motels.

The graduating class, reduced to twelve,
drive brown beaters or trucks all tuned
to the country station in Pierre, are headed
to Denver or Cheyenne, wherever there's work.

The old one's sit and watch blacktop roads
buckle and roll against the August sun.
They count time by quarter hours and moons
waiting for ghost trains to take them home.