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Adah

Larry Levis

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Adah · *Larry Levis*

I can remember the almost private outburst
Of rain on the tin sheds:
A sound as precise as a small fire taking hold
Of its kindling;
Or, when the rain stopped, the drone of flies
And their shining—
And how the horses outside
Would lift and drop a hoof in the pasture
As they grazed, heads down,
Or flicked their ears back. . .
And the skin inside their ears resembling a human's,
But softer, really, than anyone's
I have ever met, or will meet now.
Not even
The balding widow mesmerized by fans
And by Sundays
Who waits all night now for sleep
Can do without counting horses and flies
Until she is alone,
Before sleep, and lying in the stiffened
Almost righteous position that pain allows her.
And as if prayer could collapse
The tool shed and split the shining anvil
Inside it,
She will not do anything as precise and blasphemous
As pray anymore.
She will only listen, and think,
Maybe, of horses,
And do as little as horses do,
Which is her privilege, as it is the river's,
Or the heavy woods, which do nothing.
As even the mottled grass
In which the kidnappers smothered the child
Does nothing, does not even conceal the place
Now that they have
Gone on, without speaking, into a stand of elms
And into history.
Though not before they threatened a farm wife
Who was able to sift strychnine into their lunch
And serve it to them
With a tight smile and a forehead as cool

To the touch as it is now,
When she remembers it all before sleep
And remembers
Trailing them at a distance until they
Both fell.
And beside a field of white stubble
And a road she had always lived near,
And always would live near,
She watched them without any curiosity.
She thought they sounded
Like two syllables that could not find their
Proper places
When someone is trying to say a word.
It was hot.
They were human.
She felt her thin dress aging in the sun.