

WEIGHT

by Douglas Walbourne-Gough, Corner Brook – Senior Division Poetry

Age-old grease gone sour. The air dense
with Varsol, sweat, noise. Herculean clunk
of steel punched through by 750 tons of machine
begetting machine on loop. Think density, heaviness
born from dying stars.

He worked the punch-press. Shaved head, grin
undeniably shit-eating. Loved firing up the forklift,
laying rubber on the shop floor, mad-man's laughter
mixed with smoke.

Fridays, boss knocked off at two, headed
to cottage country. he'd wait, walk to his car, drag
in a bag of clubs, dozen golf balls. Spend the afternoon
trying to pick off the Go-Train as it passed behind the shop.

That scream froze our blood. 600lb steel beam,
the pressure ruptured his fingertips. Flesh and fat
escaped skin, tendons and knuckles rendered useless
as bone gave way to the bullied reality of physics.
Vomit splashed his steel-toes, stained our coveralls
as we failed to free him.

Afterward, he just sat there. Shaking.
Cigarette burning absent-minded in his left hand,
right half-wrapped in his Guns n' Roses t-shirt. Pissed off
about missing work, embarrassed for crying in front of us.
Asked quietly for a ride to the hospital.

Signed the triage nurse's forms
with a series of awkward X's