

The Price of Coal

Flood season brings
drought to the mouth
of our home. We started pulverizing

our own green beans and sweet
potatoes in the spring
for our daughter, as familiar

with the price of formula
as jarred vegetables after last
year and the jaundice

without the breast milk
I couldn't produce, and you
without work

so long as the coal can't float
to the power plants. The hunger
for warmth depleted

by clean energy. The wind
devastates us, cuts clean
through me until the call

comes for more. Contracts signed
for a few fleeting years until we have
to decide again whether we move

or stay in a small town in Illinois
reverting to the ghosts and abandoned
factories that own it.

You and I are this drift
mine, cut into the side
of a hill slowly giving

way, bargaining our lives
on recoverable reserves
that kiss us, fickle, on

the mouth. Twenty-seven
million tons don't matter
without demand.

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Blame Obama, blame
strict reform, blame
Prometheus, who damned us all

with fire. Blame each other
for what we can't provide.
Let the water

recede before we drift
apart. How wide the Ohio
seems from this side

to Kentucky. From this end
to the money.