

For Ray

Lance Hawvermale

The seller of lightning rods
dropped his bag at my feet.
He said go west young man
go west until the sun tires
of running and by the way
there is a market for solar flares
if you can bring one back,
a penny a word at least.
He mopped his face and kicked
the bag.

I saw the damn thing move.
Cherry bombs and dandelions,
a Mason jar of Venusian rain—
Eat metaphors he told me.
Let the dentist pick their crust
from your shimmering
teeth and between us the bag
lay like a bundled-up shadow
shed as skin in the Illinois sun.

I lifted the awful weight
thinking he ain't heavy he's my—
African lions strained the seams,
foghorns and entire lakes,
books with the ISBNs filed off
and printed with asbestos ink.
You better use two hands he said.