

Planting Day

Quinn Warnick

Behind the weathered barn, I crouch
among burlap bags full of this year's
seed. These kernels promise before
they prove, and I have no choice
but to trust them, turn under
the hard crust, smooth the deep cracks,
clear weeds and rocks and dead birds,
and finally count measured handfuls,
each of the infinite granules
packed tight with failure or success—
they will not say which.

I think all morning of our autumn life
and the four-month gamble that begins
today. The sun scorches my neck,
sweat runs salty into the corners
of my mouth, and at home
my whole family practices a day
of penance. I am alone in this
field of clay, trembling on a wooden bench,
my fissured hands clenching the reins
that nudge along two horses.