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The Beef You Eat Today Was Hydraulic Oil Yesterday

Dead pine tree at the edge of the meadow
light green moss in its northern branches.
red-tailed hawk stands on the sun-bleached top.

We cut wild meadow hay
bale wild meadow hay,
haul bales of wild meadow hay
down the graveled river road.
Forest fire smoke above the ridge
Sun, orange above the smoke.

Sickle-bar, driven by a reciprocating steel arm, which is
driven by a rod; by a wheel; driven by a chain; by a shaft;
impellers; shaft; pistons; explosions; diesel fuel;
oxygen, oxygen, oxygen,
and the big wheels turn and turn,
chopping down the meadow.

Cody drove forty-three miles
in ninety-eight degree mid-day smoke
for five gallons of five-dollar-a-gallon
number two hydraulic oil, to replace what sprayed,
in twelve and a half minutes, all over three tons
of our best, neatly windrowed, wild meadow hay
along the east boundary,
below Whitney Spring.

Sage brush rises
on the sharply rising ridge
toward mountain sky.

I shaded up in deep grass
under the edge of the willows
growing densely along Camp Creek
and waited for him to come back
with a new hose
and replacement oil.

Hawks and ravens,
coyotes harvest meaty delicacies
we've mowed with the hay.

Crane walks stately along the edge of mowed ground.

Motors on the highway.
Machines on the meadow.
Trucks haul hay down the river road.
Chain saws on the ridge fall trees
into summer dust.
Forest fire smoke above the valley.
Hot as smoke in the noonday sun.

Coyote eats mowed voles. He knows where I am.
Raven knows I'm down in deep grass,
man-in-the-grass, unarmed, torpid
as a rattlesnake in the heat.
Coyote and Raven laugh,
the trickster and the thief,
build a complex joke about man,
the engulfer engulfed,
they share with their lunch.
Coyote sings about the hors d'oeuvres of destruction
and Raven says I cut the lilies from their fields.

Though I laughed minutes ago,
the joke has gone macabre.
I am the fancy dancer, suspended.
The dancer is entranced
by the world of human needs.
The joker.
The thief. The deadly fool.

Cody's back.

With oily tools, oily hands,
I cinch repaired lines tight.
Sweat runs into my eyes.
Hot sunshine.
Sharp, hot smell of newly mown
wild meadow grasses and flowers
thick smell of oil, grease, and diesel fuel.

Then I diesel down hay again,
mow thistles by the pond.
Sun sets behind Greenhorn Mountain.

Coyote's gone over the hill.
Raven flew toward the mountains.

Pine tree at the edge of the meadow
Bright green moss
Smoke
Red-tailed hawk
soars

above the ridge.

Crane walks
stately
at the edge of the meadow.