

Richard Dinges, Jr.

Pride

Sun shines, a proud
moment. Everyone
opens windows
to a warm breeze.
I relax just long
enough to remember
where I went wrong,
spoke words unwritten,
turned a blue sky
gray and heard
glass panes echo
a tinny rattle
after loud slams
of wood on wood.
That clear open
horizon, now a dark
rounded shoulder,
passes over
to an uncertain future.

Current Crises

Today's crisis
arrives in cold
crystals plastered against
power poles and electric
lines. White reminds
us winter stays
longer than we wish,
no invitation and no agenda.
Bilious clouds gray
a rarely blue sky.
Snow drifts against
gray board fences
to form blue shadows
under slowly sagging
wires. We ponder fate
piling up and blocking
the only roads
leading out of town.

Preserves

Hands press cold
steel sprayed in lead
paint, play at death's
side. Ragged edges
glint, ready to slice
flesh. Time ingests
a slow rot unrecognized
by youth. Age expects
some not to survive.
Everyone plays
it safe, no child
left behind. We preserve
cherry jam youth
and forget what
it is to be young.

On the Road Home

Land lies, flattened
by eternity's haughty
weight. A sky deep
in emptiness, older
yet, spreads over
turned prairie
grass. Prairie split by
gray concrete, I cross
with high beams.
Shadows and dust
Shift between window
frames. I cannot hold
back this unbearably
irrational smile.

Jack Pine

Anchored by a barbed
wire stretched between
tall grass and volunteer
cottonwood brush,
a lone jack pine blurs
a blood-red horizon.
Gray green needles
Splay drought, cold
wind, and a sun's
dry glare. A solitary
survivor or an independent
sprout, all the same
to me, just another
milestone in my long
walk home.

Richard Dinges has an MA in literary studies from University of Iowa, and after many years, no longer manages business systems at an insurance company. *Poem, Icon, Red River Review, The Journal*, and *Abbey* most recently accepted his poems for their publications.