

## THEIR DAYS BEGAN IN THE DARK

Hoarse whispers, tired moans,  
creak of bedsprings,  
rustle of clothes,  
sliver of light under the door,

the quiet clumping of shoes,  
scrape of a chair on the kitchen floor,  
scratch of a wooden match near the stove,  
hiss of gas, *woof* into flame,

clink of a pot, running water,  
low whispers punctuated by a cough,  
the faint scent of burning gas,  
hint of smoke from his *Lucky*,

soon the aroma of coffee  
perking loud on the stove,  
clunk of cups on the table,  
splash of liquid from the pot,

voices humming now,  
cough growing louder,  
another scrape of chair on floor,  
footsteps crossing the porch,

screen door squeaking open and  
*clap-clapping* shut,  
his whistle fading off to the east,  
the barn and the morning milking,

clatter of pans in the cupboard,  
heavy thunk on the stove,  
soon the sizzle  
and scent of frying bacon,

the boy, silent, in his bed, staring  
through a window at the Sandhills sky,  
liquid black as a pool of old oil  
splashed with the Milky Way.