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## nonresident alien

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# nonresident alien\*

by John Van Rys

here the land  
is locked;  
(land-locked) i am  
im/pressed by the black-eyed sky's swell.

earth stayed beneath decaying snow  
frozen still  
holds fast prints,  
vestiges of forgotten motives,  
raw as viscera, blunt,  
waiting for warm  
dog and bird feces, perhaps  
a carcass to feed  
its cancer-riddled bones.

(walking) road sand grates  
through my soles. a grain globe  
blossoms, a thorn bush in my flesh; roots  
worm through crimson tunnels  
into white-ash bone.

the blunt snouts of houses  
turn up and aside as i pass  
pacing the grid-lock streets  
of this plotted and pieced prairie  
town, gowned with white-  
washed linen, stiff on lines,  
lips pegged tight.

the trees pass me, measured  
dark arches whispering  
pat answers to pat questions.  
listening, my bones root  
in late winter rubble while flesh  
branches splinter cubic air and hair  
vibrates, the stranger i am knocking  
at the gate:

o Lord, is this your dwelling place?

\*A title given by INS to individuals working and living  
in the United States on a temporary visa.