

## Aluminum Beds

When he pulls up in a truck and hefts new beds  
into the house to replace our camp cots,  
we see the dark in a metal's dull sheen  
is the dark displayed in his beard. The sound  
rushing through the hollows of the square posts,  
the frames, guards and rails, is the sound rushing  
through the spaces he has made within us.  
He sets them all down, the pieces he measured,  
sheared, and welded together in the evenings  
in his father's factory, while I, half hidden  
in among the machines, gathered up scrap  
fallen to the cement floor. The four beds  
stand in our shared room, one for each of us—  
with this he fulfills his unwanted office.  
He leaves us soon after, and I keep vigil.  
Nightly I allow not one of my brothers  
to speak or even audibly breathe. I know  
that the sound of any of our young voices  
will distract the light trying to make its way  
through the fitted substance of the metal. I know  
at the same time that this light is my father  
searching for his sons. He does not know it—  
long before he left us, his love began travelling  
to us apart from him. If I memorize him,  
I will be able to see the love. If I cut  
from myself all that is not my love for him,  
the right set of rays will find us. My brothers  
fall asleep one by one. I lie and wait  
for my dream. There is no space not swirling,  
no fire with its core of blackness not burning,  
within the beds' angular emptiness  
because of the love meant for us. Through the night,  
the metal embraces me. It is a skeleton,  
unending silver, pure and cold, and I become it,  
the light of my father's love arrived at last.

RUSSELL THORNTON