

Power

by Corrine Hales

No one we knew had ever stopped a train.
Hardly daring to breathe, I waited
Belly-down with my brother
In a dry ditch
5 Watching through the green thickness
Of grass and willows.
Stuffed with crumpled newspapers,
The shirt and pants looked real enough
Stretched out across the rails. I felt my heart
10 Beating against the ground
And the terrible long screech of the train's
Braking began. We had done it.

Then it was in front of us –
A hundred iron wheels tearing like time
15 Into real flannel and denim, shredding the child
we had made – until it finally stopped.

My brother jabbed me,
pointed down the tracks. A man
Had climbed out of the engine, was running
20 In our direction, waving his arms,
Screaming he would kill us –
Whoever we were.
Then, very close to the spot
Where we hid, he stomped and cursed
25 At the rags and papers scattered
Over the gravel from our joke.

I tried to remember which one of us
That red shirt belonged to,
But morning seemed too long ago, and the man
30 was falling, sobbing, to his knees.
I couldn't stop watching.
My brother lay next to me,
His hands covering his ears,
His face pressed tight to the ground.

