

First Job

by John Riley

I thought each day died inside the clock.
Punching in at seven sharp to stand
eight hours to listen to a turret lathe clack.
Eating a roach coach sandwich and reading my stained
—Paris spring, matadors, whiskey—
and greasy copy of *A Moveable Feast*.

“Preacher Charlie” with his daily chant:
“You won't be saved by a drunken sinner's book.”
The office girl with her micro-mini skirts
who stopped each day to flirt and spin a peek
of blue or white or magical pink panties.
The stamping press quaking the concrete blocks.
A winter morning the pigeons floated out
of the roof's shadow, above the welder's sparks.

