

The Welder

by Neil McCarthy

For a man with a poor command of English, he managed to describe his recent redundancy with aplomb.
“One week, everything perfect; the next week —”
He mimicked a noose being fixed around his neck and I sat and watched his eyes bulge.

He worked as a welding engineer for 30 years.
Commuted 15 minutes a day from one village to the next.
Saved up enough to buy two Italian motorbikes —
the brand escapes me — one with a sidecar for his wife.
Got laid off when the Americans liquidized the company.

I asked him what plan B was. He said “Beer.”
I told him that probably wasn’t the best idea, what with the motorbikes and all that.
He said “No, I make beer.”
I told him that was a brilliant idea, what with microbreweries being all the rage these days.
I held my knuckles up as a congratulatory gesture expecting a fist bump, but he didn’t understand the protocol and left me hanging.

