

the planting man

the man rises with the sun
his face, a blank canvas
no bird song or morning dew can paint a smile on his face

it's been ages since he was hugged terribly
even the lab looks too packed, unwilling to accommodate him
don't tree planting coaches deserve love?

his wife says he's gone mad, planting and teaching to plant
they'd have to migrate, the land is barren

he sinks to the floor
the ground is not cold,
the ground offers no peace

eyes shut, he waits for his spirit to stop sulking— there's so much to do, to teach

the door croaks
the kids are here

he forces the smile and hopes they are not scared
the first one pushes cupped hands to his face
they're urgent, they're restless, they're blind to the sorrows of adults

the man peeps into tiny hands
a sprout, a green sprout

his spirit unfurls like a blooming rose
his blinding smile appears
he takes the sprout and faces the second kid

tiny hands reach him
he peeps inside and smiles wider
there's work to be done
his spirit leaps from the ground