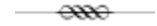


The Constellations of Slate Belt, Pennsylvania

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If Slate Belt, Pennsylvania was the night sky (which it is)
and our taverns and bars were stars (twinkling day and night),
shouldn't our night-heavens be sad and stumbling constellations?

Is there a constellation that tells the myth
of a father slumped across a long oaken bar?
Spittle in his beard? A bottle of Yuengling fallen over?

Is there a constellation of a mother—
two young boys and a teenage daughter in a yellow dress
—with a long gone husband (who made it only as far as Flicksville)?

Is there a constellation for rent payments
four months behind? Electricity turned off and on
like bathroom lights or an all night lightning storm pounding our hills?

What constellation (chiseled into our slate sky)
is shaped like a factory—a smoke stack reaching
so high into the ethereal sky that it offers Slate Belt's only escape?

Some nights I lay on my back (the grass dew-wet,
a Yuengling in my hand) and cannot find a single cluster
of stars (not one) that sings to all the fallen legends of Slate Belt.

