

Woodwork

Ken Raines

He squints and turns the beam around,
swapping it end for end. He runs
his eye down the length of the crown
and sees an overall design
emerge from the splintered wood.
Then, his fingers trace the grain,
lingering. He bows and says a word,
before he applies the adze and plane
to smooth the roughest edges down.
The heat and labor raise great beads
of sweat that drop with little sounds
to the smoothed surface. He breathes
with even efforts. Wood and water
and even breath are precious goods
among these arid hills. And later,
beneath a desert moon, he'll read,
and thoughts will gather like the curls
of shavings heaped around his sandals.