

JOSIAH BANCROFT

Mister Iron

Mister Iron could not be killed.
His ribs and bones were iron bands,
his skin, a painted submarine hull.
But his wife, who suffered his cold body
all night, his refusal to keep a single coal
in the enormous stove of his chest,
wanted him dead. She couldn't believe
he couldn't be killed, so she took
a knife to bed. When Mister Iron
rose the next day, his nightshirt
had five holes across the breast.
Wife, he said, after the first stroke,
you must've known I would not die.
The first swipe, she said, finished knowing,
the second blow shuttered hope, faith
flew out with the third, and the fourth
ruined the courage of my imagination,
but the last was for the music I made
while straddled upon your ringing shell.