

Another exclamation point dimples the sawdust.
Good hot shoer can fix all that, he says. By now
Basil has another horse in that dangerous slot.
By now he's reading me like the Times. This shoe
is called an eggbar, he informs me. It's therapeutic.

Guess you've been shoeing a long time, I say, wanting
him to say his father taught him. Wanting him to say
he's at least part Indian. Then I see the sign
burnt in wood: Dr. Basil Cauldron. Veterinarian.
Four years, Basil's saying. I'm off to New York soon.

He reads me as I frown at the sign and the iron oval
he's nailing. The vet's my grandfather, he says.
We make a good team. But I want to see the East.
My mother was from New York. The old man's betting
I won't stay long. He may be right. He usually is.

Basil straightens, committing his eyes to a grin.
Granddad's a full-blooded Navajo.
The picture is perfect again with the far mountains
and free-ranging horses in the foreground. You speak
his language? Was he in the war? The big one?

Yeah. But I can't speak Navajo worth a road rose.
I speak my mother's tongue well enough though.

You sure do. You sound like an Oxford graduate.

USC, he says. I didn't mean English. Mama was a Mohawk.