

The Key Machine

Maureen Kingston

he aligns the vise lips that will hold the bodies aloft ~ the original on the right ~ the smooth blank on the left ~ his wrist motion is steady ~ precise ~ like a jeweler crafting a crown ~ once the clamps are in place he cocks the one-armed carriage knob ~ lets go ~ a cloud of shavings erupts ~ bounce off his goggles ~ flake onto his shoes ~ he sits back on his stool like a general watching his battle plan unfold ~ the tracer-point carrying out his order to cut head ~ stem ~ & back ~ the micrometric indentations already calibrated ~ when the whirring stops he lifts his goggles ~ chamois-shines the new house key ~ places it gently as a robin's egg into my trembling palm-nest