

Heavy Metal

Central Indiana

Hoosier stamping plant:

a long, grey bunker surrounded by pickup trucks.
They're losing money, the economy shifting away
from cutting metal to cutting *deals*,
from hands-on to *brains-on*.

In the shabby conference room,
the management team glares at me
arms crossed, jaws set, thick necks, big bellies
hunting jackets on hooks.

It's our first meeting—what do they think of me?

"THIS KID FLIES IN, KNOWS MUCK-ALL ABOUT OUR PLANT,
STARTS SPOUTING THIS CRAP."

In this kind of company you have to push, push, push!
till something POPS.

Sometimes you use honey, sometimes *dynamite*.

"More people move to Indiana to study than almost anywhere.

Yet you act like you don't want to learn.

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?"



I don't mind hostility—*aimlessness* is the killer,
unexpected in the land of the Fighting Irish,
Larry Bird, and the Indy 500.

*"Think the world owes you a living?
Dozens of offshore plants do what you do—cheaper and better.
Yet you sit there glaring at me as if I'm the enemy,
as if Brazil, China, India, Russia don't exist.
You don't like it? Too bad.
Survival is not compulsory!"*

They glare some more.
Finally, we get to the end.
They gather their stuff together and walk out.
I can read their body language:
"WHO DOES THIS BASTARD THINK HE IS ANYWAY . . ."

Tomorrow, we'll tackle problems on the factory floor:
machine changeover, material flow, ergonomics . . .

Unless they kill me first.