ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

Dana Hanefeld

“Oh Virginia,” says a man
with his hat in his hand
as the color guard passes
and the straight time cadence
goes tick tick tick tick

“I wish they were here,”
And the great flag flutters
and the silver tack shimmers
on the jet black horses
as the hard heat dances
in the middle of the street
and Virginia says . . .

“I know you do.”
And she takes him by the hand
as the ranks and files
of the Shriner’s band
weave in and out
with a boom chicka chicka chicka
boom chicka chick
and the man goes back
to the boom of the bass
and the flash of the sun
on the bright brass bells
to a day in a place
on the fourth of July
where boys lie dying
and says . . .

“Virginia, I gotta go,”
as he turns his back
with his hat in his hand
on the flag and the day
where bands march on
playing boom chicka chicka chicka
boom chicka chick