

# JEFF GUESS

## ROAD WORKER

Into the perfectly smoothed  
blind dark bitumen of a suburban road  
a man is digging a hole.

Within the confines of a difficult industry,  
his work is methodical;  
tidy and precise.

By late morning with a long  
black polished crowbar  
he has cracked the tar and lifted it.

Piling it in neat stacks  
beside the footpath; glittering —  
high and sharp and hard.

By early afternoon he has dug  
to the level of his waist,  
a symmetrical hole in the road.

Emblazoned with an orange council vest  
and matching 'witch's hats' positioned  
so as to caution traffic.

He works alone, with only company  
from his mug and pipe;  
his hands the colour of the clay.

By late evening the hole has been filled in,  
the road sealed and only a lip-lesion  
of line to show where it has been.

Reason aside: by the face of an early moon  
I imagine him still down below — somewhere,  
striking with purpose;

for the centre of the earth;  
China;  
or the dark and secret mirror of himself.

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### THE ABANDONED FARM

*circa 1930*

In only a few seasons the weatherboard house  
has been swung out of kilter. Falling apart.

The fly-wire door bangs on a legacy  
of empty heat-blown summer afternoons.

Keeps time with the lunacy  
of all that's left behind,

Marks like a slow sad metronome  
the family that locked the gate, behind them —

a last time, and vanished  
into years of neglect, poverty and grind.

Now on the spider's slow industry, a tractor  
that could not be driven away is held

together beneath a golden cypress. Silver  
threads that chain it, to colossal loss.