

South 55

by Daniel Crocker

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It's like it always is
everything looks the same
especially in Arkansas

She said she'd follow me to
hell, but through this land
where everything is yellow

This is mud
This is dead country
This is a wife pregnant with spiders

You call and
ask where I'm at
Memphis
I once laid a red headed
bartender at the Peabody
but I don't tell you that

It was good

Coming from Nashville
you want to meet at
such and such an exit

and like always
I do

You touch my hand
at the Waffle House

before handing me
my ticket
your mouth is dry
a crushed diamond

I know your skin
the spiral of
freckles on your left shoulder

If it killed me
I didn't notice

You want me to follow you home
but I'm not going home

I can see you smiling
in mirrored glasses
several states behind me

If I can't think of
anything pretty to say
about it
I'm sorry

and two days later
we're lying in bed
me and Mississippi
too afraid to touch
we open the window
watch the thunder storm
until the whole damn state
falls asleep
I listen to the breathing
thunder
your breathing

the awning outside
looks like a bear
in the dark

If it killed
I've always been
a miracle at forgetting

even in this dark country
even in this year of cancer
even with all of this
I come back, Mississippi.

