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Road Trip 1946

You walk and your destinations print themselves on your feet
—Venus Khoury-Ghata, “The Stones in Your Garden”
(Translated by Marilyn Hacker)

That year, Grandma drove West
without a wallet. She and her friends,
with elbows on bar counters,
thumbed out ice from drinks.
Neon signs meant meals;
they would make men like cigarettes.
At sunlight, they would chart
to other towns—those constellations
along asphalt arteries.

This year, she sits by a wide cake
as Grandpa tells a story, hands in air,
how one night the moon fell
onto the roof of his car
and he cried out, “Marry me!”

Hard Weather

I speak through the hoot
of a hollow beer bottle,
peeling off the paper wrapper

like skin. I step inside
and curl at the base,
transparent and sticky.
I ferment there.

Yesterday, slumped in my apartment,
I heard a gunshot
as it pierced the winter and echoed.
My dog raised his hide and barked.

On the news, an 18-year-old shot
in his car, parked outside his home.
He died at the hospital, hooked
to tubes of beeping machinery
while bruises gathered, while his parents
walked in and out of doorways.

I cannot stagnate—not when
the sun is so blinding today.
I bend to kiss my dog's nose,
to scratch his ear and wish him my love.
Then I look out my window,
toward the parking lot
where the boy's car, like its owner,
now occupies some other space.
Jesus, I say—not sure
as if in a prayer or curse.

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