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Breakdown of a Truckdriver

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Breakdown of a Truckdriver

All day I deadhead West
hauling my empty refrigerator rig
like a long coffin.

At dusk the road throws curves
I can't catch. Cat's eye
reflectors leap from railings
to claw me blind.

Knuckles gripping the wheel
go white as ten ghost skulls.
I double clutch my gut
to get over the last hill,
hoping home will loom somewhere
in the final stretch.

When an outburst of brights
from oncoming cars hit me
head on, I pull in to this
lonely truckstop motel.

Here I have nothing
but the past to look forward to.
Millions of miles under my belt
knot my stomach into unlucky
concrete cloverleaves.

The vacancy sign still beckons
with a whore's wink as I drive myself crazy up a wall,
cracked into a thousand plaster
maps, ribbons of road unwinding
in my rearview mirror, turning me,
like a speedometer, back to zero.

All the ground I've covered
just a mound of dirt now
in a dream of me, buried bones
with only an ambulance siren crying
on the cold shoulder of the road,
its red cross my grave's solitary marker.

-Arthur Gottlieb
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