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Folklore

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Folklore

They dim the headlights to twin whispers,
pop the parking brake, and tape a lie to the window:
Out of gas, Back before morning. He weaves

her through three phone poles and turns
past the last bent one, the wires slack over traffic:
it's listening in. They cross when the cars pass,

then fall through the furrow of tall grass
that shades their love from four lanes:
she rubs his small shoulders, they touch

lightly, he hums a tune. It's the song their town
recites yearly, the one where an immigrant widow
hauls her dead husband thirty miles home

from a bad hand of poker, stopping nightly on
a turnpike (it was dirt then, maybe it was this one)
to lay down in the mule cart beside him. It's here

she's said to have undressed him, cupped her
hands to the still of his chest, and kissed him twice
to draw the moonlight from his open eyes.

The mules knew the way home. Some even call it
a love song, the kind you find yourself singing
when FM crackles to static, and you've strayed

from home. Their sex comes better than
expected. Traffic strums the fast lanes like
guitar strings, and the earth, already spring soft,

hums the tune. They finish in shivers. The girl
stands to a sapling they hadn't noticed before when
eighteen wheels stampede past, painting her face

in the high beams. White hot, her eyes disappear.

--Derick Mong '04