

# How I Learned Bliss

By Oliver de la Paz

I spied everything. The North Dakota license,  
the “Baby on Board” signs, dead raccoons, and deer carcasses.  
The Garfields clinging to car windows—the musky traces of old coffee.  
I was single-minded in the buzz saw tour I took through  
the flatlands of the country to get home. I just wanted to get there.  
Never mind the antecedent. I had lost stations miles ago  
and was living on cassettes and caffeine. Ahead, brushstrokes  
of smoke from annual fires. Only ahead to the last days of summer  
and to the dying theme of youth. How pitch-perfect  
the tire-on-shoulder sound was to mask the hiss of the tape deck ribbons.  
Everything. Perfect. As Wyoming collapses over the car  
like a wave. And then another mile marker. Another.  
How can I say this more clearly? It was like opening a heavy book,  
letting the pages feather themselves and finding a dried flower.

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