

TAMARA NICHOLL-SMITH
LA VIDA NUEVA DEL OESTE, 87105

We lay in a house that echoed occasional street born gunshots and
the sounds of pagers ringing in a chain like telephone tag
and listened for footsteps to follow running across our roof
while pretending we were not important to each other
faces held in practiced ambiguity.

How is it that as I unfolded nightly I never let you know the miles I
had come to meet you were not accidental? That I do not
traverse the desert casually? That 24 hours on a train, one
discarded corpse of a car later, and one far Midwest job
turned down were all so I could be where I lie?

That I was on purpose warming the spot next to you at night?

What was I protecting?
A heart beating wildly,
wrapped in plastic.

The day we said goodbye, we got up, and ate carrot cake for break-
fast.

You got on a plane for the east coast,
I drove my car into a blizzard and wrecked.
Etched on the snow, all the things I had not said,
melted half complete on the sidewalk.

I was
You were
I would have.

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POETRY *At* ROUND TOP

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