

“Aubade”

The day I see the man
praying to the sunrise

it starts to rain
for the first time

in what feels like
a year of slowly-blooming

drought circles—
bands of red and orange

bleeding across the prairie—
their centers near towns

I’ve never driven past,
though my Illinois license

would have you think otherwise.
It’s night, now. The wind has picked up

and the windows we loosed
for the hunts of spider’s eggs

rattle and snap with
swift, leaded tongues.

Their clatter is comforting
in its chaos —

the wind brings: colder air,
the browning leaves down from the trees,

a chance to feel something sharp
roll around in my mouth:

the city names — Metamora,
Monmouth, Arcola, Mattoon.

They bleed out from Chicago
on radar sweeps,

on these storms bringing day-like
flashes at 3am.

And once again
red and orange bloom —

this time, tracking flash floods,
showing me where others are likely

losing power, alarm clocks silenced
while they sleep.

That morning as the train pulled in,
I watched the man, old as my father

hair balding and his
palms pressed in blessing

before his blissfully shut eyes.
He was nodding —

barely aware of the steel cylinder
pulling in front, ruffling his tie —

he nodded, while the conductor
steered into view,

as she sliced into his
window of sunshine

and his body came to rest
alongside the doors.

And they opened.
And closed.

And we both sat down
and traveled away from the sunrise,

into the clouds and the
gathering day.