

## Two Essays · *Diane Marie Horton*

### DRIVING ACROSS THE HIGH MESA,

all day, over the continental divide, following the long descent of the Rio Grande valley to Albuquerque, and then back, the Mustang running flawlessly in the swift dark, the highway whine numb in our ears. The road, a four lane divided highway between our towns, the Animas River on our left, here wide and flat, with apple orchards planted along the flood plain. The car borrowed and very fast, the radio broken, the windows rolled up, snug and familiar, the last ten miles before home, Joe keeping it fifty-five. The bluffs rising straight up from the river, darker than the sky under the new and absent moon. Past the flood-lit Plateau Oil Refinery, the highway climbing then leveling off. In the passing lane with no one to pass. I shudder. What's wrong? Shaking my head, not sure, my eyes fixed on the road. Five seconds. From the median, a sunken gully dividing the highway, a figure appears, striding into our headlights. "Oh my God," beneath my breath, as the brakes grab: midstride, turning to look? too late, too fast, the body comes hurtling toward us across the hood, shattering the windshield, falling away behind the sound of it. Looking back: nothing, only the lights of the oncoming cars. Then plunging down into the median to pull a U-turn, the scrub raking against the belly of the car as we climb to the other side of the highway. Heading back, Joe driving fast, his face shut. The body breaking over me in waves where I sit staring through the fractured windshield, prescient and trembling. The summer night and what we knew of it streaming in the opposite direction, the river dark on our right.