

Transmission

At five o' clock in Julesburg, CO, a waitress holds us suspended over chicken fried steak, fried chicken, and chicken fried chicken as we listen to the endless serenade of that thing on the wall; the thing I say is a piece of crap, the thing Adam points to and calls the air conditioner.

Outside, the clouds ride in, grey and green, and a slat of yellow sun winks out. Across the street The Twisted Turtle Liquor Store is empty, but the drive through window is not.

"Pepper?" asks the waitress.

One of us nods.

Before I can stop her, the grinding of pepper sounds like the grinding of the transmission, but instead of pepper, the burn of synthetics, and instead of the hum of the road, the sign of the Budget Host which every morning says the same thing, "Cleaning fowl is prohibited in this hotel."

And something in me has finally broken and the rolling grass has broken open, and Julesburg bleeds into us while the mechanics bleed us dry.