

One Arkansas

by Rhienna Renee Guedry

You called from the road but not from out of town where you live, but instead, just a few miles away, just dropping in like the refrain of a song passing through, like waking up with a cold that's just suddenly, inexplicably, there. I wait for you to walk up to the doorstep, see flashes of the last time we were together and how likely it is that this will be the last time I see you before your funeral. I will pretend that I don't notice how thin you've gotten or how the drugs don't seem to be working and the purple spot on your cheek that looks like Arkansas or how we have truncated our conversations to only the essentials. No small talk. No current events, no pop culture, nothing that isn't suitable fodder for our last-ever conversation. You don't even know where I work anymore or about the lover I keep that keeps me from sobbing about you and the kitten I adopted and named after you and whose death from running in the street in front of an ice cream truck made me throw up on the sidewalk.

I don't say any of this, but instead, *looking good, you must be feeling better*. Hold my hand, let's watch the sun set, let's pretend it's last year and we believe we have our whole lives ahead of us.