

SOUTH OF HEIL, NORTH DAKOTA,  
POPULATION 24

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*Daniel Zinkand*

The lichen-green rattlesnake lies in the sun  
on a road going somewhere  
out in nowhere  
ivory underbelly stained brown  
by tar seeping through  
sun-warmed asphalt.

Ya can't kill a rattler  
just by driving over it  
Ya just can't do it  
says Arndt  
clutching the F600  
into third  
as we climb Haffner's Hill.

My aw-come-on face  
breaking through  
a wraith of cigarette smoke and August dust  
dies  
as Arndt yanks open the glovebox  
revealing rattles nestled by .22 shells  
and bounty-killed gopher tails.  
I finger an obsidian-colored rattle  
button for each year says Arndt.

When I see a snake  
Arndt says  
I back up a ways  
step on the gas

and hit the brakes as I cross the snake.

Red-black flesh lies smeared  
on the road  
waiting for crows  
coming from somewhere  
out in nowhere  
North Dakota.