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North Winter, Crocodile

Diane Furtney

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He could remember keeping score,
all those affections in a row

then letting them go. And
letting go, he let time alone.
Only the windy young
have nothing in common, although
they share findings. They find common

cause against calendars
and fear another hand on the
misted pane where, smiling,
a girl peers in on them, a gold
leaf in her damp, night-tangled hair.

North Winter, Crocodile / Diane Furtney

There is a crowded stifle
inside the country bus.
The crocodile,
out on the open, riverbottom
ice fields
that ravine and hump enough
to suit its purposes,
has already gorged
and is softening its gray gut
in the sun.
It will be hunting later
under the edge-trees
in the distance,
snouting between the blue weeds,
its thick lids adjusted
slit against the flat
winter wind. We know
the scrape of its back
claws in the ice
can leave the light streaks

resembling threads,
not remarkable enough
to warn a farmer it's nearby.
We've learned how the lozenges
cracked in its back are
the color of cold bark;
we've studied the odd
bagginess along its ribs
that goes well with the eyes
upbulged like walnuts
and the satisfaction in its jaw;
we know the dowager paws,
the slipper tail,
stabilize it
as it rushes prey across the hardness
without a slip.
There is a shift
from foot to foot; some coughs,
and a vague
resettlement of the bus contents.
Red poster strips
flag out from a roadside barn,
a billboard shutters past before
the wide glare comes back.
We all know that either
the slant of the sun
is a camouflage
—there are a dozen shadows
pinned down to the snow—
or that the thing again
for a moment
has sloped down a gully
and gone.