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South of Heil, North Dakota, Population 24

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SOUTH OF HEIL, NORTH DAKOTA, POPULATION 24

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.