North Winter, Crocodile

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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.