

Days Inn Outside Jonesborough

At 5 a.m. I slide from slick motel sheets
into traveling clothes.

The door is heavy against the morning and I hold it open,
breathing in Tennessee October:
leaf-rustle harsh amid thick ink sounds
of sluggish twilight.

Three friends sleep behind me, travelers murmuring
into pillows,
but I nestle

suitcases into the amber-lit trunk,
breath curling in the air
and fingers coaxing our bags to squeeze
between latch and lever.

In five minutes I'll wake them but for now,
for now,

the sun flicks tongues of yellow ochre between the red, orange, purple
maple trees and

I am alone with the colors.

-Leah Makuch