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AFTER BUYING LUNCH FOR A GIRL MY AGE WHO I
MET ON A GREYHOUND BUS AN HOUR AGO

Chuck Carlise

She slides a ticket from her back pocket
and shrugs. *I'm sure I'll be fine*—(12 dollars
Canadian, a bus to Ft. Collins,
then hitching to Las Cruces)—*it's not that
I've never done this before—there's always
a place to stay*. And I think of her last
story—the ride from Flagstaff, valley grass
high like small cornstalks when he'd stopped. The days
passed visibly then, she'd said. *You could watch
the sun's whole arc from that place—I stayed with him
for a month*. She picks now at the red trim
of her coat. “So why'd you leave, then?” The latch
of her bag opens, shuts. She looks down at her route,
but her eyes are distant, like she can't make it out.