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A BRIEF CIGARETTE BREAK

Kat Gurley

Leaning against the bus stop.
Thumb spins the rusted wheel.
A flame wavers, spits its last spark,
and disappears.

His scaly lips crack over an expletive
I'm too far away to hear.

The cigarette leaves an
ashy hollow in the snow.

His weather worn hat makes me think
he's an American Spirits man
and the spokes of a bicycle
click rhythmically in the distance.

He tongues the tips of his fingers
for moisture
and flicks the wheel
once.
Twice.
A halfhearted spark.

A tree deposits its burden
down the back of my tattered
coat.

Flattening gooseflesh
with the prickling palms

of my hands,
I watch my breath take form
against the darkening sky.
Ghostly. Changing.

A car alarm,
Then—

Nothing.
The world in whitewash.

The world on mute.

He throws the lighter
into the street.