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## On the Death of Marie Smith Jones

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ON THE DEATH OF MARIE SMITH JONES<sup>1</sup>

The word does not exist  
for a glint of sound  
that unblends  
whitetail deer from hay fields

If a word exists, meaning  
*soft dangerous spot on the river*  
it is no longer felt  
through speech  
in the muscles of the feet.

When I heard  
no voice to withhold this absence  
I stopped the car and stepped outside.

Snow broke from my boots onto the black highway.

There is no word  
for a blur of land and light  
adrift in veils of heat.

<sup>1</sup> *Marie Smith Jones (1919-2008) is the last known speaker of the Alaskan native language Eyak.*