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## A Brief Cigarette Break

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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.