DRIVING THROUGH THE NIGHT TO GET HOME

Dave Malone

Near a forest grove on the two-lane, I come to a full stop.

My car splits the small deer herd—lithe bodies, big eyes—on respective sides of the white-lined highway.

In the headlamp and waxing crescent light, we stare at each other for a few moments, wondering what just happened.

Such strange night noise approaching then halting to a hum during an evening forage for crimson clover and poke greens. I am less inquisitive than they though my satchel flew from front seat to floor in an instant. I drove slowly for them, for me, for this small prayer in the field, at this table, lit by the stars.
FIRST SNOW AT THE BODY SHOP

Dave Malone

Few people in town know I’m a writer. I like it that way. Their slow, beautiful lives are safe from my eye, ink, screen.

But the guys at the body shop know and treat me like an honored guest when I pull up with a broken fender, a busted hubcap. On a frenzied Friday afternoon, it’s a headlight decapitated by a cedar limb spear. Even the mayor shows with his Lincoln Navigator, driver door bent on a bender. The boys usher him out into the snowstorm and gather to hear about my latest play, how a boxer can make do with a tough stepson at Christmas. How twinkle lights shine with the grace of Manny Pacquiao, like the season’s first snow.
BUCKET CALF

Dave Malone

I won’t think of you embalmed. Instead, I’ll pretend that your family had you cremated, and coils of dark smoke rose up, mixed with cirrus clouds far above the crematorium. Twenty years ago, you sat in the last row of my composition class.

Your red hair spoke for you, a shy girl who kept a secret from all of us. You visit me often when I’m stopped after work by the train that rattles through the middle of town. The iron wheels churn, and their wind shakes my little car, sending me back to raise the shuttered windows of our classroom, where you wrote essays about 4-H and winter.

How you struggled once to put a calf down, but it was yours to care for, and it had to be you.

Author Biography
Dave Malone spent his early childhood in Riley, Kansas, and later graduated from Olathe North High School. Dave holds degrees from Ottawa University and Indiana State University. In a past life, he taught courses in composition and film. He is the author of eight collections of poetry and enjoys giving readings. He currently lives in West Plains, Missouri. You can find him online at davemalone.net or on Instagram @dave.malone. Contact him at davemaloneauthor@gmail.com.