



July 2014

A Glance in Cheshire Township

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Recommended Citation

Dekker, Joelee (2014) "A Glance in Cheshire Township," *The Laureate*: Vol. 9, Article 40.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol9/iss1/40>

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A Glance in Cheshire Township

It's not the words that I remember, even though they burned between my lips like flakes of ash tipped from a cigarette, their glow the color of sunrise over calm waters. The words, as I recall, were merely an answer to his question. An uneven sound used to fill the space between us in the cab of his truck. This snapshot is what I carry in my mind. He has just looked away from the road, toward the echo blistering my lips. His hands loosely grip the black, leather-wrapped steering wheel. He's wearing a camel Carhartt jacket that he received in the mail last week from an All-American clothing store. Buying American was an obsession of his. The sleeves of his jacket have slid away from his wrists. How strong his hands seem. There is a scar that runs the length of his palm that I know is from a hunting knife, and another on the top of his thumb. He had many scars, and it scared him that I did too, as if we both had skin like road maps but for two different cities. His thick hair is the color of corn silk if not for a tint thrown by setting sunlight. He doesn't look surprised or pained so much as accepting. Although later, recalling his face set below the bill of a camouflage hat, I'll come to see that behind his expression there is a reaction less composed and more worried: not afraid exactly, but fearful—a look I had seen cross his face before but wouldn't have thought to notice through the weak lighting in his truck. Behind him, miles of corn fields stretch across the dusty horizon. Their papery stalks will soon be cut for the harvest.

— Joelee Dekker