

LAST TRIP TO PENSACOLA

we sit silent
in their long silver Lincoln all the
way from Eldorado
packed in
shoulder to shoulder
while Maw-maw reads
the signs:

BEN'S DONUTS 'N' COFFEE

LOUISIANA, THE PELICAN STATE

27 MILES TO NATCHEZ

*Maw-maw
straddles the gulf
her legs wide
and each wave washing
half-way up
her white calves.*

*She used to be fat but lost
her girth and will tell you,
Doc Wilson said
I'm a prime candidate
for sugar diabetes
and just had to lose some
weight.*

*The sand is white the water
brilliant and I'm waist-deep
out beyond her
watching her bend
squint past the surface
following some treasure
forgetting that after each wave
comes another to slap her
legs
roll gravity against her.*

She collects shells.

WELCOME TO THE MAGNOLIA STATE

HOMOCHITTO NATIONAL FOREST

GAS, FOOD, CIGARETTES

*Now Pat, how much sugar's
in this corn bread?
You want to kill me?
Doc Wilson says
I've got to watch my diet.*

*Lyndal stop this car
and find me some fruit
or I'm gonna have another shake.*

*You all know I've been having this pain
right here in my neck*

*I did have this rash
all up and down my arm
but Mama used to tell
that urine cures the shingles
and wouldn't you know Mama was
right.*

ENTERING THE HEART OF DIXIE

WILMER, 4 MILES

NIGHTCRAWLERS 4 - SALE

*Maw-maw draws her arm
from the water
a bright rose shell the size
and shape
of a monkey's heart between
her fingers brings it to her face
just when the largest wave
darkens her light purple mumu
up to her hips
and the shell slips
from her hand
as she catches herself
with the other*

Lyndal I've lost my shell.

*I've lost it
Lyndal come help me find it.*

WELCOME TO THE SUNSHINE STATE

On the beach
wrapped in her robe
under an umbrella
she mumbles, Lyndal
Lyndal
I'm thirsty
and Paw-paw hands her
from the ice chest an orange
soda.

I find a spot in the sand
near her
ask if she's seen any good shells.

You got a picture
of that girl?

Hum-m-m-m, she's got such
pretty blonde hair
straight teeth--
she's a Christian?

Later she says,

You got a picture
of that girl?

She studies it
lifts the
orange soda
to her lips
brings it
back down
adds,
You carry her back
a pretty shell
from here you hear?

She points at the gulf with the
picture.

You got to
find yourself the
prettiest
one
hold it down
with your toes till a big
wave comes along.

Let it pass let it pass

then grab that shell
'fore the next
one steals it

and I go straight out
to find my shell
because I know we won't be back here
again.