

Alvy Carragher

**THE ONLY FEAR
I'VE EVER HAD
IS STANDING STILL**



Gallery Books

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*for those who choose kindness
day after day*

Home Stretch

Sadness never left
the way I hoped it would.
Never packed itself up
and disappeared midair,
never hitched a ride
with strangers out of state.
Nobody could touch
that kid. Running too hard
down some big American road
in a land where the asphalt
stretches on forever.

One Big Drive-thru

Driving from Louisiana to Arkansas, North on I-49,
speeding past Alexandria, Natchitoches, Shreveport.

Each reduced to a road sign with an exit up ahead.
I had read about The South, and now I read the names

of what we bypassed. Texarcana sounded like two places
knitted together. We spent our weekends hurtling

along highways to the same hotel in different states.
The country was repeating itself. One tartan track

was much like any other tartan track. This was America.
Gas Stations. Subways. McDonald's. Olive Gardens.

No wonder the radio kept singing about heartache.
We never pulled over to walk the streets of Pine Bluff

or stopped to find out why a town was called Hope.
Driving through Fayetteville, field after field flitted by

full of cotton tufts puffing from rough brown stems.
Row after row of history. The land distorted

in the wing mirrors. Someone pointed out the window
at a field of sheep, saying — *look at those weird dogs.*

What I Would Like to Know

I don't care how Telemachus kept his nerve
or if his mother never stopped weeping.
All those sons and daughters of the myths
staggering through the same old tragedies.
I want to sit in the long grass of your days
and ask what it was that helped or hurt
when the hours of your life broke loose
and spread as big as any myth before you.
Tell me, how was it that you woke and slept,
and then kept on waking and sleeping,
even when such words became impossible?

Scrap

I spot a discarded glove,
you an abandoned hat,
and so the game begins.
We point for days —
a scarf here, a boot there,
until finally assembled,
our ghost struts the streets,
missing one elusive sock.