

JEFF EWING
Rice Burning

We drive north
through silence
 and rice fields

bristled with
stubble, blackbirds
 and herons.

The air through the vents
is sweeter
 than it should be

but sweetness
about to change
 to something else

like candy held
in the mouth
 too long.

Our eyes water
we taste ash
 on our lips

a crackling sifts
like static through
 the window.

The flames are
not yet visible
 just the smoke

flat as a dry cloud
pulled taut
 over the fields

and the lights
of the county truck
 flashing.

Someone at least
is watching, tending
 this smoldering

that could so easily
get away
 from him.