

DAVID STARKEY

My Cousin on His Way to Score a Fatal Dose of Fentanyl

...that place where now / You must not hope to arrive.

–Donald Justice

You hurry from your rented room
on the edge of Industrial Valley,
cross the Cuyahoga on the West

3rd Street Bridge, then shuffle-
run along Carnegie all the way
to Hough—it's a long, weird,

tortured way to cop—surely,
someone closer was holding,
but you always held close

to your habits. I remember
as a kid you used to catalog
your Kiss records by release date.

Your pencils had to be sharpened
to the exact same lengths
or you'd throw a fit, tapping

your forefingers obsessively
against your forehead until someone
else figured it out. Oh Kevin,

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I wish I could not picture it
so well—bare trees, gray snow
banked on the curbs, that wicked

Erie wind. Finally, a man
hands you what you want,
a dime bag of forgetting,

and you scurry to the nearest
shooting gallery, where
my imagination dims

to soft-focus black and white:
a rustling in the walls, shadows
in the slant of afternoon light.