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He Wants Me to Describe It

My friend wants to know what I think of
when I panic. I pause in front of lit shop windows of long
wrap-around scarves, beaded necklines and Indian silks.
Absence, abandonment are the words
but they don't satisfy him. Our kids are in a bakery
calling us to taste how quickly meringue
melts on the tongue, how sweet it is. We forget it's late
until we say goodbye.

He will go back to his apartment with his daughter
who will soon go back to her mother in New York.
I will drive home on the night road
where I almost met oblivion. His daughter will cry
because she doesn't know why Christmas didn't feel like Christmas.
I will remember how easily the car wheels skidded
off the wet road in a new year rain.

When I panic I think of that wide desert space,
the expanding field of it, the harsh, cold swallow of hope
in a black night drive when the roads are wet and I have had
too much to drink and desperately want to reach home, the feeling
is as still as a punished child waiting to slam its fist into the door.