In Russell, Minnesota

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IN RUSSELL, MINNESOTA
KAREN MORRIS

At midafternoon in Russell, Minnesota,
the four alcoholics drink coffee in the cafe,
which is closed. On the opposite corner,
twenty-three cars nose up to the bar
like pigs at a trough.

Ed tells the story
about his nephew and the roof,
and the other three smile,
although Ed's been telling the same story
for seventeen years
and they heard it last on Tuesday.

It is better than watching the fields turn silver,
better than worrying about
the water rising south of the barn.

The rain drums against the glass.
And Ed measures water for another pot.

PASSAGE
KAREN MORRIS

from me
    but not of me,
like the paper boats we launched
at girl scout camp,
each bearing its own candle
on the dark Mississippi:

my children,

harbors
    no matter
how the stones are piled
upon the breakwater,

change;

frail ships—
    I wish you fair weather.