Flinch

Dorothy lingers, her scalded cappuccino eyes
following the steady flinch of his fingers
against the porcelain. She watches him,
hunched over his single emptied mug,

his face a husked expanse of flesh,
wrinkled and uneven, twisted as taffy,
midnight skin dulled by Nevada days and
malt nights drowned out in tears and

an absent wife’s screamed good byes,
his boy’s face staring, forever staring,
from the crooked passenger side window,
and him too blue sky high to care.

He stares at the stains in the cup, delighting
in the constellations that only he will ever
know, wishing each was an island he
could discover and explore like he once

dreamed as a child alone below the dinosaur
bed sheets that hid him from the silhouetted
corner walkers draped in shades of night
and phosphorescent light, the sleep-shattering

interstate and the aching bed springs above—
and him concealing his wealth of uncharted lands
and beckoning seas in that single tenement room,
where no thief of time or man could stumble upon it.

Now, he sits on that chrome coffeehouse stool,
dead reckoned by the stars hidden in his mug—
Dorothy’s eyes following his rhythmic tic,
his bent body a shadow against the noontime sun,

his dimpled brow turned down as if in prayer,
faded lips perched, puckering up with a silent question
that he answers with a Newport, and the steady,
echoed beat of his fingers upon the coffeeless cup.