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It's something I've hardly ever thought of:
this simple and rattling old diesel
has always gotten me there and then some;
and so at first I think this sputtering
is just some clog, and easily explained:
some bad fuel maybe, from the new Exxon,
or just shortsightedness on maintenance.
I've always driven in the red before,
and these have all been straight highway miles —

*(Except for that short trip out to Zoar Gap
to catch the last of the late season trout,
surprised to find them still rising, sipping
my high hackled Humpy's and Coachman's
from dark pools in glazed and shimmered twilight.)*

But that was nothing and of no account.
I drove Tuesday down to the town meeting,
and argued about the new town landfill
and proposed cutbacks in school athletics,
and then to Sears for a fifteen amp fuse.

At any rate there is no way around it.
I can only smile sheepishly, glad
that I'm really not in any hurry.
Still I feel like a fool out flagging trucks,
gesturing for help I can't give myself,
hoping that my lines don't need to be bled,
and I would have to spend that time thinking
of some way to explain this empty tank
to someone who probably knows better:

You know I always thought that maybe
something like this could happen to me —
but not now, not yet.

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