IN FLORIDA

There, amidst the malls and kosher delis, I wasn't measuring up. He'd taken me to meet his family, and I, farm boy from the frozen north, felt out of place. I made mistakes when I ordered at restaurants; I lost my temper at the mall. His grandmother didn't approve. He'd been asking me to make this trip almost from the day we met. We traveled in June, not the best time to head south. All travelers possessed of any common sense were headed north, their mini vans in caravans moving slowly up the interstate. The first day, I burned. I'd been watching an ibis in the condo parking lot, amazed at a bird I'd only ever seen in hieroglyphics on Egyptian tombs. Stick-skinny legs and that impossible beak! This is what can come from traveling: too much curiosity.

As I stood on his grandmother's balcony,
I could hear her inside her refrigerated den

saying

he seems nice but it isn't right,
those people can be so cold.

We broke up shortly after that. It was nothing
he did or said. Only a growing chill when
we were together, my way of being in the world
that collided with his. The last time I saw him,
we were both crying. It was August. Dog days.
The heat, unbearable. It was a bright morning
but I was cold, even in the sun.