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My parents and I dash back to our rental Nissan, ready to beat the eclipse traffic. As I lower myself to meet the vinyl backseat, I dread what is to come; Google Maps is already telling us that there is a two-hour delay on our route to Orlando, bringing the total travel time to twelve hours. Snack wrappers and warm plastic water bottles occupy the seat next to me, making the already tight space more cramped. I remove my Adidas shoes and socks and leave them to sit alone under the passenger’s seat in front of me, gifting my feet air to breathe. I try to rest my head against the hard glass of the car door, but I am persistently interrupted by the divots in the country road that we travel to reach I-85. My music blasts through my two earbuds, trying to entertain me as the same untouched green fields flow by outside my window. My playlist is 7 hours long, but our original trip up to Clemson took us more than 8 hours, so I search my phone for some fresh songs.

As I get settled in, I focus on the needle of the speedometer as it slowly creeps downward to 0 mph, remaining there for hours as if it’s on an extended lunch break. We are behind 10,000 other vehicles in line to merge onto I-85. My dad turns off the car, abruptly ending the flow of cool, artificial air and bringing my attention to the might of the full summer sun, now unobstructed by the moon. I abandon my seat belt and lay down across both rear seats, trying to mimic my soft bed at home. I dream of laying in that bed now; those two firm white pillows, the eggshell sheets, all covered with a plump grey comforter.

The car wakes me with a jolt as we begin to accelerate on the highway. I sit up and click the nylon seatbelt. After an hour of marveling at the street lights that fly by, my legs ache with stiffness, but there is no way to stand or stretch when both parents insist on speeding back to Orlando, not wanting to cut into the time of the trip by making a quick rest stop. I begin to feel a pinch in my lower back, which is only relieved temporarily when I shift positions in my seat. Needing to escape this discomfort, I eye the rear seat next to me, and begin sweeping the granola bar wrappers, empty bags of chips and pretzels, banana peels, eclipse glasses, and half-empty plastic water bottles off it. With the seat clear, I survey the road, flying by at over 70 miles per hour, and jump over to the seat, fumbling to buckle myself up again. From between my feet, I snatch the leaking cooler, filled with cold cuts, cheese, bread, beer, and a pool of water that was once ice, and plop it down on the other side of the car. A puddle marks the spot where the cooler was just a moment ago, tickling the bottom of my feet. I layer my two socks over the chilly carpet, balancing my feet on their dry fabric. Somewhat comfortable, I begin to rest my eyes, again dreaming of the cozy bed that awaits me at my home over 800 miles away.