

BARBARA CROOKER

Road Trip

Spring ahead, the weatherman said, which is what we did,
driving down I-95, watching its scroll unroll before us:
purple and yellow crocuses in Maryland, a smudge
of green on the trees. In Reston, VA, the buds start popping,
and a cardinal sets his road flare on a bare bush.
By the Wendy's in Stafford, a stunted Bradford pear
tries to open. There are daffodils right before Thornburg;
in Richmond, pear trees pose in full wedding cake attire.
Near Oxford, the redbuds have faint violet scribbles
you can barely see. Chapel Hill, NC, blooms with: forsythia,
weeping cherries, magnolias, flowering crabs. The first
palm trees shake their shaggy heads as we pass
into South Carolina, and palmettos unfold their fans.
Yellow jessamine gilds the woods. Leaves begin
in new chartreuse, and the sun butters everything
that gets in the way. Finally, Florida, where plate-
sized hibiscus, red/orange/magenta, on a backdrop sky
of ultra-blue, are almost too much for our northern eyes.

Coming back, it all rolls up again as buds tighten, fold
their hands, grass loses its green, flowers slip down
the straws of their stems, and trees go back to basics,
bark and twig. We return to the everyday world,
colorless and cold, wondering if we took this trip
or if it was just a dream, that maybe this year, spring
will linger in Georgia, sipping peach wine, forget
to hit the road.