

Why I Still Drive by the Abandoned Shell Station Belting out Bruce Springsteen

*—Glory days, well they'll pass you by
Glory days, in the wink of a young girl's eye*

Next week, it's time to go to confession.
I need to commit a sin for forgiveness.
Don't have a personal trainer to lust after.
not too honest, but too timid to shoplift,
what can I do? Would it be a sin
to not put money in the offering—
I know to take money from the plate
would, but I do have my limits.

Life was not always this way. Back
in the day, I'd have to choose
what needed to be absolved first.
Waiting for what would come later
in the dark, I'd try to impress
Cobra, Big Daddy, and Mongoose
working on their muscle cars
standing under Shell's garage bay lifts.

I'd go on about how my father who was
born with a gift for staying poor, avoided
mechanics like them. Lying on pavement,
shoulders wedged under the chassis,
Daddy taught me to make-do: baling
wire the exhaust pipe to our truck's frame,
never top off a leaking gas tank, drive
55 to avoid 60-mile front end shimmy.
Heat was from cardboard propped
in front of the radiator. In winter,
a screwdriver wedged in the throat
of the carburetor, ether was sprayed
into its bore to ignite the engine.

Back then, steppin' out over the line,
weekends, nights with my petrol gods
more than prepared me for the priest,
as I'd slink into the confession booth
on Sunday. Drag racing. Chrome-wheeled,
fuel-injected suicide machines.
Fuelie heads and a Hurst transmission
on the floor. Superbird, Rebel Machine,

Boss Mustang 302, and Barracudas.
Nitro-methane bulls belching tailpipes
and fiery exhaust wringing the air
where I'd stand by the pits, fruity aroma
of fuel, acrid smoke from treadless tires
I knew to call "slicks." Those memories
have not grayed, have not sagged.
If I can only manifest genuine contrition,
maybe it's not too late to be a penitent,
seek forgiveness for sins I never confessed.

