Oops, He Thought

It was a quiet ride
from the party.
Finally she said,

I thought I had told
you not to say anything
about my sister.

He knew she knew she had.

But it doesn’t . . .
he paused, knowing he had
crooked himself in his own trap.
Remember to never begin a defense
sentence with but, he reminded himself.

He began again,
mouthing his words with
deliberate care . . .
What I thought was, knowing
Brad and Jan don’t know your sister, that they could offer some
insight into . . .

Don’t even go there, she said.
You’re not helping yourself.

They stared at the silent
dark road, the white lines
pacing their distance to home.

—Bruce A. Noll
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Bruce A. Noll’s poems have appeared in numerous journals, including The American Entomologist, Manzanita Review, and JAMA. He has one chapbook, The Gospel Edits. For 42 years Bruce has been bringing the poetry of Walt Whitman to audiences through his presentation, Pure Grass, which has been seen in 26 states and five foreign countries. He recently retired from the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. Email him at banoll@unm.edu.