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Because

Ellen Hagan

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Ellen Hagan

Because

—after Cheryl Boyce-Taylor

Because country, clay, dirt
& de-generate. Never been
known to de-escalate.
I'm a situation. 'Cause of cornbread
& don't I all the time say cornbread
as if anyone's forgotten my love.
Because bourbon, way a whole
town can get drunk on a mood.
Because Miriam Hagan
& Elinor Sferra Bazaz. 'Cause
Aziz & old family stories, poker
games round the table. New Haven
& Dumont, New Jersey,
rows of corn & fat tomatoes.
The flip-flops I lost down
the shore. Ocean. Floor & plankton,
backwoods & that good weed
highs & the creek bed out back,
hush puppies we'd buy w/ quarters
pulled together. Hunger. Don't you
know I was wilder than you can even
imagine & I'm still loving. Living.
Can't read old journals w/ out cringing.
Because Sterling & Old Barton's,
touring distilleries in grade school.
Born rowdy & rode it far & long
as I could. Because Aunt Tina
& cousin Ricky. Saltwater, sand,

& cracking shrimp until they peel
straight from their bodies. Slick
& shining. New York skyline. Because
I was 22 when I rode in on a yellow cab
from LGA w/ two suitcases & a whole
life I was leaving behind. Sometimes
you have to go far, far away
to ever come back home.