



South Texas Roommate

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Tines of its tongue
Follow me,
Circling behind the ceiling vent,
Bending inward,
Bending outward into a Y,
On the edge,
Through a slit.
It's circling the vent,
Papery rustle
But a deepening silence, now,
A large silence
Blanketing me,
Its rattle tip peeking
From another corner of the vent.
I remember the story
Of my husband's student
Moving to Freer
For his first teaching job,
A free house part of the deal.
He and his *UHaul* arrive after dark,
He picks up the key
At the superintendent's house,
Drives to his new house,
Opens the door,
Walks across floorboards,
Finds the bedroom,
Switches on the light.
A rattlesnake lifts its head,
Relaxed on the bed,
Their eyes meet.
The student turns and leaves
The house, the job, the town.
That quiet appraisal,

Tasting my shift from curious
To horrified,
To not the same,
Not wanting to go into that room,
Looking up toward the ceiling
Before I enter,
Wondering about the bed.
That silent presence follows you
Ever

Y

where.