

South on 1

Sparse canyon of	antiques, roadside produce, filling station	
America's iconic two-	lane backdrop	
Could be Wisconsin -	trade cheese for lobster	
Could be Indiana -	trade cornfield for shipyard	
This could be allegory	of American homogeneity	
Trade culture	for passage of time	
Take your foot off the gas	and	learn to relax

Fortune slumbers, loudly, in passenger seat. She rolls from one end of reclined seat to the other, seat belt barely restraining or restricting subconscious movement. Each major shift accompanied by airborne arms, a counterclockwise salute.

I long for diversionary rest, but rain commands my attention.
Precipitation deities are aware of my translucent knuckled presence behind the wheel.
Brackish gods chuckle as I shift seated weight in sync with Fortune's restlessness - a windshield wiper rhythm of malcontent.

My companion's sleep annoys as I navigate each ocean finger with the delicate care of child-drawn chalk line, playground fresh.

Hours stretch between Bar Harbor and Portland. "Time is relative" is Fortune's mumbled chorus. Asphalt keeps rolling, treadmill steady, as automobile gradually halts, unnoticeable to my mortal eye. I am distracted by hemolymph smeared on soul's windscreen. We're out of washer fluid, but we've a plane to catch.

Pushing forward impaired is best course of action.

Surely.

Of course, at this moment of unknowing rest, action is precisely the stimulus needed to propel automobile from coastal valley to omnipotent peak.

Above Atlantic fog I could accurately plot remaining course.

Surely.

Instead Fortune continues her sleep, now silent. Now drooling.

Instead of keeping my attention forward I watch saliva creep down her chin.

I ponder

"Which mountain birthed this moment?"

First Birdsong of 2018

When I began walking I was warm.
The Distance between cold and wet shrank
with each concrete softened step.
Evaporating dog piss commemorated

communal moments.
Golden hour good mornings:
unbridled, unwanted, unnoticed warning.
Leave

the shovel at home.
Twenty-thousand dollars and finally
released
for worse or for better.
I'll say
goodbye to all fair weather acquaintances.
Alpha-keratin accumulates more quickly at
equinox's first light.
Take your own advice
into wild, wintry April.

Suerte de Varas

I chased you down the long hallway of our home
Birthday giggles leaping
upward
outward
down below
I ran into you, soft collision, exhale and crunch:
train cars coming to a halt
One by one momentum cushioned,
velocity quelled
Your red lantern ignites righteous indignation
Bull to Matador I lay it out straight:
"Damelo"

I charge while picadors sharpen bassoons
My hoofs are heavy
You blithely skip
around the hall

I bleed to picador taunts
Each reed rings
Each prick stings
(takes one
to know one)

You exit the arena
leaving capote in center ring's matted earth
Each horseman brings newly improvised vara
Each frothing mount cautiously approaches
on tiptoe

I consume crimson
I drink deep from entitled, betrothed chalice of rage,
lip lined with rubies
reflect
magnify
your dusty distraction, my leaking desire:
red, red, red

I collapse,
fade

Respect you gave, respect I take
Crumbled in my solitary selfish heap
I grieve
I sought to gore, I sought falsely assumed reward:
warm underbelly
I overlooked you for blood-sport:
a self-fulfilling, and just, annihilation
Live by the horn, fall on angled arundo
Each instant carries a crossroad
Post no bills

Mr. Straight Up and Down Man

“It is the Communists. I know it seems hard to believe, but it is true. This isn’t conspiracy. What could the Iranians see in the Chinese? The Chinese need oil. They need money. Why do you think there are so many Chinese restaurants?”

I really don’t know how to respond except to say that I imagine many people enjoy Chinese food.

“Bullshit. It only tastes good because of the Opium [the Chinese Communists] put in it. The Opium Wars ain’t over.”

I get the matches and he buys the gasoline. It looks less suspicious this way. Town to town we cut off the supply of not so independently owned Chinese restaurants’ income to the People’s Republic. I order chicken with mixed vegetables. He orders cashew chicken. Sometimes we get crab rangoon as well.

“Good shit” says Mr. Straight Up and Down man.

Living on the road I pretend we are a touring band. I lost my guitar in a kitchen fire in Columbus. I sold my ukulele in Aurora; we needed gas money. I speculate outside the motel:

“Oil comes from old biomass, like dinosaurs and stuff. Isn’t that weird to think about? The giant flesh and bone beasts of the past now fuel the giant metal monsters of the present?”

Mr. Straight up and Down man thinks that oil is mostly comprised of ancient plant material. I say
“That isn’t the point.”

I say "You're so straight up and down" to Mr. Straight Up and Down Man. He says "Let's go in." He throws his cigarette butt in the ashtray. I still have half of mine, but follow suit.

I receive phone calls all through the night, piquing the interest of my business associate. I tell him it is friends calling drunk.

"They must be getting tanked."

I agree.

My phone records, if examined, will show a continental divide. This evidence will reveal a mutiny and a plan B. My confidants warn me to be careful.

Cold leftovers in the morning accompanied by a sore back (I slept on the couch). The snow falls and I am out of cigarettes. Just as well I suppose.

I ask Mr. Straight Up and Down Man if he knows which cigarette gave him cancer.

He says

"yes."

How to Get Ahead in Seoul

Earn the blow job money
in restaurants closing before they
open - metamorphose
into convenience store before
you circle the block
I'm an old man from another country
vision weakened by glass
Walking up Cambridge Avenue in daylight pondering
"Does anyone ever purchase spices from TJ Maxx?"
Naïve young cheese laying on a fritter
crooned by Capricorn Boyz
gelatinous
unremarkable
everyone craving something real
Vantablack
absorb all photons
obscuring
all crumpled definition
I'm false
simulated
a Caulfield phony
Fathers, religious or biological, in their beds
I'll take any I can
Walter Cronkite asks "What do you *want* to do?"
"I don't."