

A D V

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U R E

R A M

I C K

Winter city, western light. Or seaside solace, eastern chill. Choice happens by stun of day and ruin of night, and what one most wants is to be wolfish and noble—but one's a coyote without pack or nerve. Or one's an excoriated fox without wile, spindly and gray-legged. I long for one last destination-free ramble, out beyond these contemporary mists. We could leave tomorrow, or the day after, rucksacks and rugged boots, thigh-energy for the road. Though you could diameter my radius first. Though the open spaces won't disappear while we sleep in comfort another fortnight, or until the weather warms. If we could walk half of forever without turning back, that would be a handsome act. Though I could couch your cunning first. Though whatever we do, Death won't bat an eye. One takes a tentative step out of the living's ring of fire and one's lost to them—an obsolete token

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that's rolled under an ancient immovable freezer on heaven's back porch. This may be the advent of one's demise, a product of the desire for one last anything—final fling or last hurrah or grand leap. I'm going to stride into that vanishing point some sparkling day, he bragged to his comrade, but his comrade went before him on a day more sterling than that of any holy birth. The upper converse of one's thoughts is more tin roof than cathedral vault, more scrubby ridgetop than conifer timberline. If we're going to go, we should go—but we're aware that the thrill's often in the not-going, in the resisted and resistant touch. Now that we've exchanged remote spots, that's enough. Though a deeper trajectory of involvement could exist in some parallel place. Though a permanent road trip would have a shot at curing my grays. She shed her knickers for the sake of unsafe and he fled his britches for the

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fray—what gives credence to chance. Clamber toward apex. Rush from judgment. Snow accents wheels, boots, stone walls, driftwood, moss—a little beauty in the world. Out of the flow one studies loss, seeking the punctum of aftertaste. Starvation looks very different from afar—as does loneliness, as does happiness, as does rot. If rain eventually tires of falling, even in the wettest tropics, what made us think we could create immortal gods who would never stop breathing, or what made us think we could be such unchangeable gods ourselves. One goes from slack to unslack, from shut to open, with a simple glance, with a single idea—our changeable selves. We don't know how to risk everything for nothing, which is the only risk worth taking, and I've chosen the unchoosable, which was dumb of me. Though I could as easily have chosen the too-choosable, which

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would've been tacky and endless. Though the ability to choose assumes free will, and free will is a hung jury. One moves across the room toward sleep as if drowning in one's dreamless bed were an option, as if one hadn't many times already drowned in one's thoughts while awake. Consider the fool. Pity the source. Voxish is the self out on the open road, the shut case velvet-lined to keep the sunglasses pristine. Erect at the wheel. Slacker in the pew. I've wintered these streets long enough, numb to the lure of the sea. One should hoist a rucksack onto one's shoulder and be gone. We die into this life. Already dead, we needn't fear death—we're familiar with its ways. Unless one's afraid of life. The only automobile worth owning, driving, and maintaining—once the progeny, if there be any, have grown and fled—is one with two seats. But give me two good shoes at the end of two working

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legs and a quiet country road with generous time on my hands and I might believe in you. Though you don't appear to believe in me. Though I often don't believe in myself, except when striding and observing, clear skies or blustery day, companioned or alone. Plain wood is sufficient to humble you. One slept on the white linen in the Roman Quad. We're double-bound by angle-try, but we're free to complain, our strength in letters and vocal scope, the high-ho hook in the electric outro, charged to stun. He wasn't as faithful as he thought he was. As a journeyman, I think I'll stand and assert that Everest is no Atlantis, that the Antarctic is no El Dorado, that the Mariana Trench is no River Styx. The quest is Gehenna, not Goshen. Wicked is the living room. Attic comes the jewel. Crawl space as our sacred stain. In the alley of alleys, one admires those old-world shutters, greener

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forests. You've spent your reveries on ruts and bruises. I've cost more than a mint. What falls onto the swept floor of our debauchery is still edible. Vanish the point. Coat the daring breast. Though violence in that coal stairwell will always turn lusty. Though the coarse palm smooths the snow brow. We've been to the end of this road before. Cliffside morrow. Her pear cardigan landed on the blackheart anodyne of his steering wheel. As espionage, I'll exhaust myself upon your landscape, those mounds of camaraderie, the sweep of grand terrain, that narrowing valley. All of heaven envies the mobile vigor of a trusted and trustworthy vagabond. More cure for the sweat-vixen. The downtrodden hope for satin and lox, for ease of loss and readymade meals, for honest and stable recognition from any of God's minions, for chances to waste energy on chocolate, for love and health and victory and

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vengeance. Your grip upon my frank consequence makes the vulnerability worthwhile. Chamber in nadir. Rust on attachment. At the edge of an empty horizon we hide our proof, and harsh is the true prayer. We knew it would be a disaster and it was a brickman's version of a disaster: we were token travelers, the windmills had fallen, and we weren't accomplished fools or reckless-enough explorers to fame the ripped sky. You won't make it back to me, she told him, winter's surf crashing behind her, and she was right—she's always right about temporal flow and his directional heart. Polished wood makes you long for gentler twinings. We might callously ask for forgiveness, the kind already given at the outset of every human drama, brought in by acoustic caution and set to kill. No sense of place can compensate for the severity of senseless time spent longing for some great

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elsewhere. A wandering mind isn't as bad as a mind without wonder, whatever the cost. One goes sleepwalking on a night of heat storms, one's bygone gown the color of cloud-to-cloud lightning. You rode me to my nearest number. Her strength was in her shoulders, so she thought she could swim across the lagoon without incident. The carnal voyage carries us too far beyond childhood, and that windowsill is overscratched. Gownless, she slipped easily into the black fluid, someone's inner ink. What one wants from one—now and durationally—one's not given to anyone else. Though one might think one has. Though she might also want something from him—today, or soon, till they're cleaved—something one's not given to anyone else, something one didn't think one had to give, not meant to come from a wayfaring loner. I've abandoned expectations of a noble end,

recognizing my scat as the result of trifles. You could've done better if you'd outwaited me. Other the blaze. Order the court. You'll get the last word and I'll get the long silence. Creative royalty isn't bestowed at birth—it's earned, as everyone knows, via the circumstantial alignment of effort and luck. I'm but a commoner with a strange jaw, and thus my stroll through town went unnoticed, as did my astral jaunt into your dreams, a failed project. Amazon, Nile, Rhine, Mississippi, Rio Grande. Cape Horn, Drake Passage, Strait of Gibraltar, Bering Strait, Mono Lake. Himalayas, Andes, Alps, Rockies, Sierras. Sahara, Gobi, Kalihari, Mojave, Anza Borrego. The excitas comes to one. Gully or vacant lot, rivulet or gutter flow, grassy knoll or sidewalk crack. He barely knew how to tie his own shoes, yet he noticed her on the kindergarten playground, and also her companion, in their dresses

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with their fluffed hair, and his id was changed, inexorably, convincingly, as he gazed upon otherness. I've made my mind far too discreet, my body far too discrete. One wants to take your hand and lead you out of the garden, but you're too smart, too quick, and you get there first, into the wide open world. We'll watch her conquer ambition with compassion, cowardice with distraction, courage with common sense, and we'll watch as she relives everything worth reliving, having found her own adult way from the cellar to the treehouse. It should come as no surprise that one's admired more for one's gumption than one's gall, and that one's vilified more for one's imperiousness than one's bile. Quicksilver your affections and I'll come along. The mind strains to go farther than the body, but the spirit's already there. Or, alternatively, one just wants to be a good person, a decent citizen,

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and live one's life without crude drama. She crossed his corpus wearing her filthy boots, with her newest trousers cuffed, her thoughts on his flinches and dodges, if not his sinkholes, on his quirks and edges, if not his dropoffs, if not his tucked dismissals, and though her crossing wasn't without incident, it was without injury. Though she wouldn't have begrudged him a squinted cut or two, a storm-colored bruise or two, an annoyance-torn muscle or tendon she'd seldom been forced to bring to bear upon any travail. One's someone who desires novelty, not wefted fetish or personable nostalgia. Sphere the critic. Flange the spear. Her fortitude should outlast all scrutiny, while his stance withers toward central summer, toward centrist ease. We could leave tomorrow, though we might've better left yesterday, when the rain was freshly gone, when the gate was ajar, when we were younger and not

afraid of ill-determined nexts. What if her thoughts about one's failings were the outcroppings and downs of one's rambles, the stones and burrs of one's footpaths, the glens and gorse of one's wanderwegs—would I still be able to express my joy for her when next in her company, when next under her stare, in fixation or abandonment, demanding or distracted. You won't venture deeper into her catacombs, not in this life, not when one can stand on the shore of one's youth exposed to an unsheltered sky. The smells of their distance. The sounds of our fake eternity. Love isn't anything if not desperate in its doubts or desperate in its confidence, in its confidences, if not a perpetual horizon of dispartes. I'm not you, one's not one, and Kokopelli is no Quetzalcoatl. If you have them, wear your stripes, tigress or skunk, chipmunk or zebra, prisoner or flogged Christ—it could as easily be

girlish socks or onesie pajamas. Or, alternatively, one may stand undressed at a sunstruck window while the blinds stripe one's body—cool, say, across one's navel, warm, say, across one's clavicle. You can't hide much from Nature's view of everything—microbes and expanse, majesty and tears. What if her feelings for one were dependent on one's goodness, not on one's existence, or on one's consistency, not on one's zest, not on one's zeal, or on one's looks, not on one's intentions—would I be more likely to pursue autonomy in the known corners of my intellect or in the steam of chance, once loneliness clutched at the soft spot under my ribs, as it's bound to do, in the middle of the night and upon waking and on long afternoons and until one's best breath. Though one suspects loneliness isn't life's worst malady. Though one's forever over-emphasizing autonomy. Tantra the scale. Liturgy the

scope. Whether we travel around the world or around our consciences or around and around in our neuroses, we'll have been in some sort of physical or mental motion across some sort of physical or mental space in some sort of physical or mental time—assuming space and time and motion exist (an unrisky assumption) in ways we can accurately perceive (a rather less unrisky assumption)—and we would've had to still have acted out of love—assuming love exists beyond our language as some uncontrollable emotion installed and modified for survival. If we could roadtrip without end, or at least without expected end, without obvious end, one might worry it would lose its novelty, one might worry it would grow tiresome, one might worry one's worrying would be what would ruin it, though together we're all a roadtrip, and we can't undo our togetherness, scrivener or bard, whatever

the season, whatever the cruel weather, regardless of the car or the condition of the road, whatever the rough-hewn aspects of the motels, we're not worriers, not severe worriers, we crave the coming hour, we revere surprise, as long as it doesn't separate us, her from him, as long as it doesn't superimpose us, me as you, as long as—at the end of the sun, at the finish of time—one's heart and one's strides are commensurate. I've come to tell you what it might be like, what being mobile together could do for your pallor, what leaving here for there could mean for one's everlasting and overloving you, what march of progress is diseased, what utility there are in hands and unconscious melodies, in ankles and composites and the eyesores of failed art, in our spans of knowledge and invention, our ruins of reach and awkward feelings, whatever's real and whatever's not. The only way to die: everything ventured, everything lost.