

D E P

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I C K

Anchors aweigh—or duty be damned, it's time to abdicate, it's time to be on our merry way. No love is an island, and no hate should be continental. You can leave, but you can't insist upon being forgotten, just as one can go off with a bang, or leap from a height, or hang around too long, but one can't call do-overs. I've no regrets, or none with teeth anyway. Not everyone can stomach cancelling conception, and few get to mulligan death. Ask your God to. Quit cranking out Time. Ride piggyback and chew on my hair. Please tend to the darkhorse my love rode in on. We can't retrofit topology onto folklore the way one might imagine one's grandmother's girlhood, or the way one might listen to Beethoven played on a ukulele, or the way spun honey tastes when eaten off of a Bowie knife. Out beyond sight of land, the solitude grips and thrills, the loneliness enlivens and deadens, the

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expanse quickens and coerces. One feels the prompt to be spectacular, but one isn't. Toward evening of the third day, I knew I wouldn't change the world, but I also knew without doubt the world would change. When we leave what we know for what we don't know, we might think the adventure will suffice, but adventure's no substitute for love, much less Love, not even when it's adventure in some bright major key and love's shadowed in the devil's interval, not even when one augments one's heart's reach with diminished romance. You've put too many chips on blackened felt. She thought she could unsane him and quiver him to her purpose—zany points launched with enough curvature to outmatch the forge of any shield—but he was stretched too straight for such strategy, his classical voice easily muted by the wing beats of parked swans. I've played a whole adulthood for a royal flush

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that only comes with lightning or genie, with leprechaun or genius, with the luck and timing of a lost generation. What's held as evidence isn't jury-proofed, isn't judge-worthy. What's buried in our yards is seldom treasure. Take the hunt inside. Suggest your God. Quake in the presence of abandoned memory. Seesaw while the organ rumbles the nave. Please rest assured I've not met evil and harbor no eagerness to. One's gone almost the moment one arrives—though life's long, and boredom's more ubiquitous than hatred—and yet one must nonetheless have identity and character and manage some ethical stance, one must do right some of the time and be unafraid to do wrong (be mistaken) now and again, one's thoughts flowing out of and into the collective stew, one's miracles and one's disasters not all happened, no matter one's stage, no matter one's flaws or goodness, no matter one's conscious

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disbelief in deterministic fate or divine fortune, no matter one's libido. As the planet choked on plastic, he tucked away his inclinations before they were made manifest to the not-him world—one man's tinkering with ideas and privilege amid disinterest and disregard. His was an unenviable half-heroic dance without much threat of laughter, without much chance of tragedy, and once his lava reached the sea he could leave his place of corona and flair. Whether I ought or not, I envied him his quirky dance, as I envy one one's vale of love, as I envy you your solitude, as I envy her her ferocity, as I envy them their mindlessness. Mine is a realm of silver strands. Mine is a place of slight contrasts with permeable discernments. Delicate faultlines. Thread distinctions. She put her hand on my potential and led the ardent mind into fatherhood. One can taste one's victories in the middle of most every night, but

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what should one do if, come dawn, they always feel like defeats. How does one not forget that she's as vulnerable as any tree at the edge of one's cliff, and that one shouldn't hang a hammock between one's trees—or a noose from any one of them. You're a sunbather on a new-moon night. Or you're a star of rumor in a sealed cave. We die in millions of ways (maybe billions of ways)—if we were to taxonomize them, perhaps only thousands, or hundreds—or only one: sustained cessation of breath. I suppose I could try to choose among the iterations—do it my way, so to speak—but I'm too curious to see what you've picked out for me, no matter how ordinary it might be, no matter how painful or embarrassing or isolating or tedious—it won't be that different from life. Grant me irresistible vertigo. Cast me as the Fool. Violate my principles. I demand you. Penetrate irony with fever. Window all that's winsome. I beg to. Be

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the better lap. Slake her liberty creek. If lunar caution or solar indifference, still, formidably, stellar. Outside of the lost loved ones behind our darkest and most persuasive griefs, we miss nothing more than our origins, of which we know next to nothing, and we pine for nothing more than our ultimate destinations, of which we know nothing at all. When she looks at me—her eyes fixed upon my deflection—I see the history of the species—or at least the warm-blooded mammalian portion of that history, or perhaps only the post-diaspora portion of our history, that initial diaspora toward snowy reach, toward surf and sunbathing. If here we stand, heads in hands, as many sorrows ahead of us as behind us, our gods of no consequence, our ambitions and coffers and stories of no consequence, our loves mattering only when they matter, language keeping us from understanding, words not as vital

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as blood cells, as warm skin upon warm skin, the truth of life in the loins and not the cerebral cortex, rakehell and slut outloving philosopher and princess, we robe the garden as we ash the trees, you rob my monstrance while I worth your spare, one oceans their deserts across inhuman time, and he glories her holy in the dead of day. She's undauntable. She'll be more land than sky until she needs to be more sky than land. Her mind's as fire-fresh as Earth's beginnings. One leaves (one left) because staying isn't allowed—and sound feeds back into air, and air beckons silence—and one didn't weep when one's mother died, though one wanted to, or when one's father died, though one expected to. Godliness has nothing to do with cleanliness, but we're nonetheless diseased. I capture you in thoughts you're powerless to escape, one thought after another, a parade of thoughts covering trodden ground, or a

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necklace of thoughts in sacred shade, or
a spray of thoughts at an isolated beach.
Our spaces elude me. Armies gather and
men die and lands are distressed and
children suffer and women are abused,
women who must put everything back
into order until their wayward boys make
a mess of things again, wars not mattering
and pearls of peace strung together on
laundry lines not mattering, death not
mattering, not in reality (it's inevitable),
only as concept (where would we be
without it), love mattering more as
actual thing than as abstraction (it has
specificity, it carries weight). We entertain
ourselves with violence and conflict, with
romance and dreams, and our divisions
of worth create heroes and heartbreak.
Distance occludes us. The time comes
to leave all of this for something else.
For bon voyage and the rigor of oneness.
For rectified fun under the mortal sun in
our small rowboat on our quaint pond.

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One's been to our rodeos and carnivals, our pageants and ceremonies, our flea markets and farmers' markets, our circuses and symposiums, our conventions and fairs and marches and auctions, our weddings and showers and christenings and funerals—one, within one's scope, has attended to life—and one, believing in other, knows these activities should and will persist, but one no longer wants any part of them. The Dance is more than its dances, and the after-Dance is alluring. I've dotted your i's and you've crossed my t's and together we've made our moves, shimmy and prowl, scuffle and swing. She carried his awkwardness to the edge of her lagoon. His words were all smudged. We aren't taught how to die—since who would be our teachers, who could mentor us, and how might the master/apprentice relationship be formed? Artisanal death must come from within, or from meticulous observation

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of the world, but wholesale death is easy. A goal is to die with dignity. To depart on good terms, on your own terms, having packed light. Tell your god to. Question what's thought of as absolute. Build leafcastles in a gale. Take my hand anytime now—show me something new and insuppressible. One moves to music one can barely hear over the chatter, the traffic, the unclever fray, one's shoes of higher quality than one's soul, one's bare suburban feet too tender for anything but carpet and lawn, one's heart still up for trying, even if one's mind isn't, even if one's body wants nothing to do with either—it's eager to ramble, to engage and frolic and gorge and sleep, to crest the next ridge. She said he ought to settle down, so he did, and they were happy in their manifold settlements, but the interior wilderness is untameable, incorrigible, deadly, with its own natural laws of ineffable charms and chasms.

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