

No Where Travelers

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He asked how to get his boxes to Boston
and his bags to San Anton

I told him some things
are too heavy to travel,
and my home
is a desert thunderstorm

The tall gray clouds,
my hopes,
the lightning
is my fleeting flesh,
here for only a moment,
the thunder is my dreams,
louder than light

when close by,
and the rain is my worries,
my exhaustion from struggling
with the glorious blue mountains

He said he thinks about too many things,
like where do people go when their
desires are shattered by a random
hammer,
and how do babies end up crying
in empty arms

He said he doesn't have a home,
he moves with a sense of abandonment,
and all his things in a bag;
now he wishes to pack up
all the static and clutter
of his random thoughts
and send them far away

I told him I just try to think about nothingness
as a destination

Josephine and Howard

For my paternal Grandmother and my maternal Grandfather:

Grandma, I sensed your resurrection today;
something pulled at that mysterious rock,
that hardness we keep inside,
and my eyes began to water

Erin named your great granddaughter after you
and now I can see the ripples returning
from a not so distant shore

They've traveled through that darkness
where decay, emptiness and seeds
yearn to find one another
on a humid, buzzing border night
filled with the aroma of masa
and hibiscus

I've just spent a week with Grandpa,
I know he's not your husband,
he's come from the other side of the fence,
but you've both given me so many lines to trace

Following the two of you takes a patience this now crackling
and fractured world tries to short circuit
with a hard jolt like someone
struck by lightning

Jittery, charred and frazzled it's hard to notice
the stories written in your wrinkled flesh
and slouching shoulders;
time makes these impressions on you,
yielding tales to search out
like reading the bark and deciphering
the hidden rings of a tree

He tells us about the country he's seen,
unfolding years easily,
and tearing down the cities
with these tales

A whole world has been built

in a single lifetime,
and he's watched the cranes go up
heard the computers hum to life;
hands reaching across a skyline
placing perfectly fabricated blocks
here and there,
like toddler gods playing with a new set of legos

They move quickly and the walls close in,
the horizons shrink;
new machines, new ways of thinking
fill all of our spaces;
there is a constant prattle of voices
in the background
speaking in tongues while the congregation
rolls around in the dirty, asphalt streets;
lost souls confused by all the petty deities

We've all been carried out by this heavy tide,
where has the silence receded to?

So I just ask questions of him,
sensing the quiet of fields ready for harvest,
the patient miles it took to get there,
and watching the breeze move across the tops of things,
and I try to remember you, Grandma

Bicycle Ride Down Orange Avenue

I can hear the old blues man on the corner
as I ride through this city of desire
listening for a heartbeat

He's got no instruments,
only his rough voice
keeping time with the rush of buses
and cars

I spend hours listening to him,
trying to get a hold of his jagged
and mysterious words,
coated with exhaust
like the red bricks of the building
he's leaning against

Then I see a lonely muralist
down a long, trashed filled alley;
he's scratching out
the image of a godhead
on a forgotten wall;
a deity with a Mayan's forehead, pixie's lips
and Buddha's gaze into the distant,
the near,
the silence
and me;
he says the title is *Axis Mundi*

I'm buzzing now, so I travel through the painting's center
and pick up a traveling companion;
we quickly head east, into the rising sun,
searching for a new city

We follow a roaming gull
through the piercing sirens
of shattered streets,
past the storefronts locked
to keep the Vietnamese gangs out

As we rush by I tell the scared owners,
trapped in a cage of their own goods,
maybe these ghetto rebels
are the destroyers we're all looking for,
those who'll turn this 7/11
society to ash

The wandering bird
comes to rest atop a light pole,
staring into the horizon
and we find some respite for our weary legs
on a bed of long, uncut grass
and try to gather our breath

The two of us talk over the nature of mountains
and clouds and I recall
how I tried to tie
her watery soul to my solid and jagged
slopes,
discovering it's impossible to lasso
evaporation;
we decide we're lucky
if we can dwell in the fog for awhile

Rested, we leave the tired bird behind
and begin to move towards the sound
of drums booming from a skyline
cluttered with construction cranes;

immense insects building nests,
twig by twig,
for the coming storm

High up in a window of one of the towers
we spot a girl's face
and know it's her voice
we've been seeking

She's trapped in the scripture of her mind,
but I can still hear her shouting down at us:

"There's a place for your home nearby
where money's useless;
so call in all your hopeless missionaries,
they're working in all the wrong places"

She tells us she's been trying to climb down for a lifetime,
so she can walk through these streets,
how she wants to carry water to the sick
and bring her footsteps to the aimless,
but she's lost her map
down a dark hallway
generations long

I guide her, with words which bend around corners,
to our avenue;
upon touching the asphalt
her brown eyes shudder
and she flutters away
to perch alongside the weary gull we left behind

Then we realize we've gotta be outta here before sundown
and the shadows are getting long;
turning to flee quickly,

we leave our machines behind
as I lose my partner
in a flurry of cascading green, digital numbers
and feel the air turn cold
against my sweaty flesh

I've exhausted everything;
tripping, stumbling down a steep hill of paved concrete
and I spot a patch of broken windshield glass ahead;
I fall into this smashed pile
of a thousand jagged, green jewels,
and each little mirror of yesterday pierces my flesh

Landing somewhere near to home,
I walk out into a night damp
with the memories we ignore,
and the scent of my own blood in the air

I find I'm beginning to remember how these songs
fit together,
so I reach down,
dig my hands into the cool dirt
and dream of the village to come

Neighbors

Sleeping wolves on cool, shaded cement
shedding their white and gray hair in the summer;
ashy puffs gliding away in the breeze

Small innocent children, dancing around in the warm sunlight,
stroke these dreaming beasts,
while grungy street prophets speak apocalyptic verses
in fiery tongues;
as they shout out lists of our given sins,
their grimy and bearded faces
hide a wisdom years of sleeping with the stars
has burned into their flesh

An old woman wearing a green hat passes by;
she walks towards the cathedral on the corner,
with hopes the glowing, wrinkled man in the cassock
will pry the nails from her palms
and guide her to Eden

Silent in the center, a stunted tree grows through the cracks
in the sidewalk, "Thou" carved into its skin
and cigarette butts seeping into its roots;
all these participants in oblivion pine for
holiness and the ability of osmosis to let gritty miracles
become nutrients for their resurrection

But tattoo shops are more prominent than bus stops;
we talk only through ink and attire
rather than leaning towards our lonely neighbor
in the seat next to us,
close enough to smell her morning coffee and nicotine,
and listen to her story from the night her husband died