

He'd checked out of the roadside motel, and he'd ridden West then South then West again all day. He'd been doing it day after day, and he knew that without looking at a map, at some point the farmland would turn to plains, and that the plains would eventually turn to mountains and plains, and then mountains to desert, and then desert and mountains to just desert, and that eventually he would come to water. He knew he'd see a combination of all of it, that it was an immense continent, and he watched the sky he was facing turn from dark blue and black to pink and then blue to an orange and a red and a lavender and shades of blue again to black. He'd taken back roads and dirt roads and two-lane roads that seemed to be nowhere and endless to the Interstates where the endless parade of big trucks made their way ominously and mysteriously from someplace to some other place. If the blacktop was the spiritual realm, then the truck stops and the highway plazas - the diners, the gas stations, the souvenir shops - were the churches where the drivers got out of the machines for a little while. The smell of the exhaust of an idling truck; the smell of bacon, eggs, toast, with potatoes; the smell of gasoline; the smell of farmland grass and cow manure and wet soil; the smell of stale air in a small, dirty bathroom; and the smell of coffee all run through your senses like a horse race every two hundred miles as your muscles tighten up more and more, and your body is sore, and you feel a fatigue that feels like the sadness that comes with being between two places, of leaving somewhere to begin to get somewhere else. It's a sort of highway purgatory. You haven't really left a place until you've reached where you're going, and you haven't really reached a place until you actually get there. Then you really know you left the first place. It's the same way the whole time...You get on and off exits. You come in to a gas station and you pull out of one. You open a bathroom door and you leave opening the same filthy door. You order a plate of food and a coffee and you ask for the check. The sun comes up behind you and it sets in front of you. There's a mountain range in the distance and it's the same distance over your shoulder only the light in the sky is fading now. You turn the truck on and later you turn the key and there's not silence but no sound of the engine. There's a hot coffee in your hand and an empty paper cup being thrown in the trash. You check in to a roadside motel and you checkout. It's as I said a sort of highway purgatory. If you think about it, highway purgatory is an interesting idea. You've committed to leaving somewhere and you've committed to getting somewhere, so you've made multiple commitments. It takes a lot of strength I'd say then to be there. By being in one place, you've committed to one thing. That shouldn't be as hard. I guess some would say that being in one place and sticking to being there is probably the hardest. There's no engine running to drowned out your

thoughts, so your stuck with them, with your idea of yourself, and therefore with your idea of the world. And having to have an idea of the world I think could take a long time, maybe even a lifetime, so I see why some people never go

to highway purgatory. They stay in one place and settle in to an idea of themselves and everything that follows from that - regardless of whatever that

view is, how true it is, or how they figured out whatever they think they figured out. I guess it doesn't matter as

long as it's agreed to. Things don't end up right much of the time in this world, but things are agreed to more often than not. That's what keeps things going.

Looking at things from where he was, he realized he never really agreed to much,

so without leaving a place for quite a long time, he ended up somewhere else without leaving. But after a while it felt like nowhere, so he left, and he moved around so much that it got to the point where moving was staying, meaning

as said before, the way people stay somewhere to settle into a view of themselves, he kept moving to settle into a view of himself. He became aware of

himself in places where nothing was familiar, where everything changed quickly,

where he was unknown.

Driving down a straight blacktop highway racing dusk to the skyline West watching the flat farmland and the wooden-wired posts and the cows and the horses and the farmhouses and the metal silos in the distance all turn to shadow

as the sky lit up with color and as the warm air became damp and the air that of

cool soil and dry desert, he became aware of himself in the world, in that moment, within the mystery of all that meant that he would know and never know

too. He would start to understand the distance between all that he had known and

where he had come to in his own mind, and the air on that road on his sleeveless

arm resting through the rolled-down window as he drove down that straight highway kept him from caving in fully to the numbness that had crept into his life, the numbness that reminded him how far he was drifting away from all he had known before. He wrestled without even knowing it the battle between the protection of that numbness which

kept what had drifted seemingly close, and the difficulty and the fear of knowing just how far what seemed so familiar had gone from him without him seeing it take place. It was as though he were in a small boat just beyond the

calm surf of the ocean and rowed and rowed and fished and ate lunch and rowed some more all along seeing the sand and the dunes just above the changing surf

before him, only to wake up unaware he had fallen asleep with the oars in hand

then to see that above the breaking surf there was no more sand or dunes, but just water as far as he could see.

The road framed by open flat land and an endless sky and the open window and the

soil and the desert in the air and the fading light coming out of the sky and

the sound of the engine and the big trucks in the mirror and way in front of him
and the endless highway signs and markers all kept him aware that he was still
there for another moment in front of everything he ever was and behind everything he would become or not become. And as the air cooled and the sky darkened, and as there were fewer and fewer cars and the headlights of trucks mostly now, he started thinking about a gas station, and a coffee, and something
to eat at a counter where in his exhaustion without having to look up much he'd
listen to the voices of waitresses and truckers over the sound of clanking silverware scraping plates and a hissing loud grill as he had each evening for
some time, and he looked forward to it, before settling up what he owed, and wandering out into the darkness
to find a roadside motel where he'd pass out in the darkness of the room under
the glow of a blue light from a flickering soundless television that kept him from being too alone while he dreamed of things in his sleep he wouldn't remember for all time to come but that would be a part of him for eternity nonetheless.