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Three Poems

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY, CHAPTER IV: THE MIRAGE

Out of Yuma and heading west, you feel the lift of air: a thermal dares you to try your wings.

There is a dance of heat way down the road, a swaying atmosphere, and suddenly you see the dance turn clear as ice and above the ice, a mountain that is not there.

A floating island and a cold inland sea: too much for the mind to take in such a heat. You bat your eyes and caves of wind take form. The island undulates in dance. You think you see a ship.

The desert dips, and your mind is slow to follow your body down. Heading toward the end of sky, the bus realizes the road. You see the mirage with another set of eyes. You see the mountain real as the wind against the window you count your own eyes in.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, CHAPTER IX: LEAVING, AGAIN

You've got to leave this land again before it hurts
you into a sin the years will not ease: a constant
fear swells in your groin, and there's a singing
in the trees your blood wants to beat time to.

Easy it would be to stay and dream, to walk wolf these
woods and fields, to play what you've always been
and are afraid to be. You know there's a crescendo
building in your blood, a raging conquistador, wild
sailor, part pilgrim looking for a Mecca he'll never
find. Or find and lose and find again.

Dreams you once had in a bad time come back to haunt
your ears: sounds of music too sensual for light
drum dark in the soft trees, and the leaves begin
again to dance and shapes take form, lovely and
green.

You see the muddy river clear, sirens naked on its banks.
A wild urge silent on their lips tells you plain this
land will always sing you back, quick with dream, your
hands always poised for overture.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, CHAPTER XI: PRELUDE TO WRITING

I am dreaming. I am sitting here dreaming. It is raining and a good time for dreaming. I do not know whether the poetry will come today. If it does, I will be ready for it.

I think it is going to come soon. There was an image of a footbridge a moment's eye ago, and a river under it. The water was still with a scum on it, and what looked like, from that distance, a paper boat. It could have been a paper sack. But that doesn't matter. Sack or boat.

* * *

A limestone bluff to the north. I think I see a cave, wild flowers at the mouth. Steps leading down from the top. I walk down them. Someone has lived in this place. In powdered stone, the soft imprint of a thigh. Ants trail across the dunes.

Strange how the wind writes on water. The wind carries the scum away, and the sky floats by the mouth of the cave. Someone is looking out across the river. It must be me, but I do not know the eyes. They are a long way back, and they see only the reflection on the water, not the water itself. They are looking at the falling sky.

* * *

The water is suddenly white with geese, which see something startling. The geese do not fly; they paddle dumb and careful circles around one another, timing each stroke with the certainty of flight. I am sure of one thing: they want to know what it is amazes them before they try the heavy sky.

* * *

On the bridge, someone has left a grandfather's clock. Its face is peeling in the rain, and the short hand is missing. I turn the key: there is an odd sound, like sunlight striking leaves, or kisses in dark old doorways. Something is going to start in a minute if I keep turning the key.