

Spring 2011

The Monkey Cages in Winter

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Recommended Citation

Waldrep, G. C. (2011) "The Monkey Cages in Winter," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 74 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss74/16>

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THE MONKEY CAGES IN WINTER

It's not as if you weren't happy.
You had your Jeep Cherokee, your stained t-shirt
reading I AM NOT YOUR EVIL EMPIRE,
and even if the snow was drifting
in from Lake Ontario, Jack-in-box, corpse-
in-copse, everything fit perfectly well

inside the ghosts you were weaving
from the stones that had fallen from the castle wall.
You checked the mile marker sign
along the suburban highway
against your body's natural temperature
set loose amid the fissured animals

nobody stops to gather, or report to the police.
This is what cell phones are for!
trumpeted the enormous billboards
erected by the pilots' union. And that was fine, too,
face cards in the spokes of some childhood
orienteeing extravaganza. In this film,

you ride a jet ski toward some Carribean paradise,
except for the long, slow tracking shot
of you methodically erasing your incorrect answers
from a tattered book of crossword puzzles.
So many things we've known
began as skills and then grew into something

more puzzling than the twisted contrails
fireworks leave against the bright patronymic
of *I'll have what she's having*.

When you sign the papers, you're reasonably sure
the dinosaurs really are extinct, although
this doesn't keep you from hoping:

that you will be the first to photograph
the funnel descending from the gravid supercell,
that the human body attracts oxygen,
that where I'm calling from
is just one more story we'll all agree on
later, a tent folded inside some color we left there.