Champagne on the M

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We climb the night’s spiral trail to the giant concrete M masoned to a steep face above Missoula, climb one I-beam leg, whitewashed and looming—the northern lights’ ladder of soft blues runged in a Gemini rain—climb to celebrate 33 years of breathing, the miraculous stamina of the heart and how everything finally comes down to this involuntary rumble and punch of one fist-size muscle.

Sara the veterinarian pulls a magnum of “American Pink Beauty” from her pack as if delivering a calf or lamb and I swear we can hear champagne fizzling in a drizzle high above the city’s neon-streetlight-traffic buzz, hum, and hiss. So fresh from cloud, this rain tinctures our sparkling wine to an elixir we drink looking up through long-stemmed crystal, a fairyland goblet of stars. We huddle closer, still catching wind, and learn how hearts have hop-step ways of keeping cadence with one another. Our glasses clink to miracle, to muscle—clink to love above Missoula—sound so unique the universe skips a millisecond, listens, then gallops with us into pure blue stride.

—For Sara

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