

Elsewheriad

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Eating enchiladas under umbrellas — a warm night with the diesel stink of a generator — when your armhairs stand on end. Last summer something happened that you should remember but can't. Sit there poking holes in the styrofoam plate. You can't remember, so just eat.

Last summer you pitched your two-man tent high above a green studded with sheep while Chinese Opera on the plastic radio fuzzed in and out. You had extra cash from trimming weed for the Kiwi with the fifty-plant indoor grow, so you went to Beijing. Not far away enough. Local trains and sleeper buses on new highways and pothole dirt tracks for two days. You took a bruising busride from Lanzhou to the edge of Tibet.

From there on foot, with the big purple backpack that everyone laughed at. You didn't know what they were saying, but you understood. Look, that big guy is his own donkey. Haha. When people laughed at you, you told yourself that this is what they were laughing about. Later a lama said that you resembled a famous demon. Take what you can get.

You walked through the hills for a week, begging tea and flatbread and porridge. The porridge was wretched stuff, *tsampa*, some coarse barley flour with hot water and rancid yak butter melting on top. Rancid yak butter tastes kind of like blue cheese. Later, when you were hungrier, you developed an appreciation for it that lasted till you stopped starving.

Beyond a wide plain you found your mountain and scampered up it. Near the top you pitched your tent and tuned the radio. For two days you drank white liquor and ate strange cookies that tasted like banana hard candy tastes. Then you had no food. You filled the blank notebook with words but when you got back to the hostel you read it over and it was garbage so you threw it out and called your ex.

Next thing you were on a Canal Street curb with sodium lights

and sirens, eyes straining open for the 2 AM to Boston. The banker next to you was staring into his phone like it was a window on salvation. His wrist was swollen in the muggy night, the watchband digging in like industrial zipties pinning protesters' arms together behind their backs while cops drive them from precinct to precinct, searching for empty cells. The banker was playing Candy Crush Saga.

An hour later, the Chinatown bus slopped back and forth in hot buzzing quiet. You remember that last year a gambling shuttle making a run back from the casinos in Jersey tipped over and slid into a pylon. The pylon sliced it in two and only the passengers passed out on the next seat over survived. You laid down and propped your face on your palm before drinking the bottle of two buck Chuck and doing your best not to hurl.

Awful dreams of horses symbolizing something. Your nightmares are all palominos and paints. Hooves pounding around your head like dubstep in someone's house you'd never met before so didn't feel bad drinking his Lagavulin. Maybe that was the next day. You can't remember whether you became pals or his bouncer threw you out or whatever. Rich asshole with too much booze and not enough liver.

You remember a kid at that party going around asking people to punch him in the face, insisting it's what he wanted. A taker swung and kid dropped, beer hitting the concrete but not shattering so a great spout of foam and piss shot out the dick end of the bottle and stayed mid-arc for an eternity. Then it fell on kid's shirt and laughing face.

The enchilada zone is lit by a dozen incandescent bulbs strung between the umbrellas. There are twenty types of hotsauce in capless gunky bottles. Try a few and settle on the green one with the smoky flavor. Some mezcal behinds its burn. Take out this old book of poems somebody was going to dump behind the thrift store. Deep in a poem, feel a soft breeze come up your back and balloon out your sleeves. As they sigh slowly back onto your arms your muscles relax, you hear the mariachi music from inside the taco truck. Tip the last dregs of orange-colored soda onto your tongue, close the book, and start walking.