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## Evening Travel

James Pate

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# Pate: Evening Travel

## EVENING TRAVEL

James Pate

1

The train smelled of the ghosts of hairy animals.  
The windows were bright then dark then cold.  
I curled across the seat and my thoughts marched  
off to sleep on little wooden legs gnarled by frost.  
My right hand turned off and my left hand stayed  
on guard. I dreamt we were going down  
and then up, but never across or back and forth.  
The stations stood out from strips of smoke and mud,  
the mountains curved their backs  
along icy shores, the lakes were carpets  
of moon. Underneath the local currency were bones  
enough for another day. I walked along the street  
with my hands in my fists, my head in my teeth.  
No dog ever returns to lose what it began with.

2

From far away it didn't matter but around here it partially  
did. I heard the last part  
over breakfast. No one cared how it started. No one  
heard the records in the room she  
smoked in  
in the hotel where the nights  
stood in for furniture. There was the song of  
the black mirror. The song of ankles  
and shredded wigs. The song of war  
and snow. The song of fingertips and spilt bourbon. The song  
of the floating wedding dress. The song of the thigh  
on the TV screen. The song of the shoe  
on the floor. The song of pissing in  
the fire. The song of flies snapping  
in the flame.

3

We moved along with the shadow of the train.  
You watched a moth, I waited by the window.  
The idea of sleeping too long is similar  
to the idea of walking naked through a zoo  
where the animals are bald and hungry.  
Their eyes stare back in the old photographs.  
Their voices are waiting like teeth in the grass.  
When we arrive our suitcases will be empty. We'll  
open them to collect the rain. We'll bury them  
up to their grins and shoot the zippers  
from their smiles. It's late but never late enough.