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Newberry: A Word Before You Go

A WORD BEFORE YOU GO

BY

JACOB NEWBERRY

It's April and the dogwoods have finished blossoming. The Bradford pears were the first to go. Now even the azaleas are shedding: a carpeting of white and pink across the sidewalks where I run. Through the late stages of fall, there were the acorns to crush as I passed through the city. Even as it grew colder every day, I could anticipate the sounds my feet would make, trampling those early lives of oak. I fear there are not many trees left to bloom this year. If only we grew hydrangeas in this town: they flower every month.

But not all good things have passed. The breeze is heavier now than in autumn, and the trees with their many leaves sigh much more deeply in the wind. The skies are clear, and the days are steadily warmer. Already this spring I have been running and fooled myself into believing that the heavy swaying of the trees was in truth the sea, believing I could smell sunscreen

on my face and hands, that the next hill would crest upon a vision of the water. I have made the long drive once to the beach this spring already, but it was too cold to be what I wanted. I left sand in my car, on the floor, in the seats, so that on warm days I might believe in some small space of my heart that I am still living beside the water. Try it sometime: sprinkle sand on the carpets by your feet. Then one day you will enter on a summer afternoon, your car a greenhouse made of steel, yourself a wilting orchid, and the sand will come to you quickly as a pathway to a planet without land, where all existence is submerged in the blessings of the sea. And you'll be grateful.