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Too Far From Home

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Too Far From Home

Mary Dengler

Vacations far from home, escapes from winter
Work's routine, after a day or two turn quickly into
Summer work's routine and welcomed as the point. What
Luxury to turn to summer reading, denser than repeated,
Sectioned, planned-for-question reads; to summer walking,
Not a sandy stretch of beach at first, but half a mile
Of hotel carpet, long enough for guests to quench their thirst
For color, dodge the desert heat, burn off winter pounds,
Exhaust their restless children, check their phones;
To summer eating--leafy greens, light wines, sour dough--
Instead of lentil soup, dark wines, and nutty grains;
To summer friends, whose faiths and works diverge
As widely as the desert, coast, and plain. At first,
The contrast shocks my brain, like stem-cells from a just-born
Child; but soon the brain adapts to 10-lane interstates,
To coffee shops for study, hotel rooms for family life, five-hour
Drives for conversation, ocean dives for punctuation, screams
For winning slot machines, beggars on the street too far from home
For explanation. Once, while waiting in a line at Golden Nugget's
Paper shop, I saw nearby a youngish man who stood there statue like; his eyes
Stared straight ahead. He said, "Don't mind me" at no one in particular.
I said, "I don't. How are you doing?" Stunned, he focused, silently, then
said, "Could I talk to you?" and barely touched my arm. But husband Ed,
Without alarm, replied, "We have to go. We'll miss our plane," and
Touched my other arm. So there we left that little more than boy,
Confused and lost, too far from home to know which way to go. By
Providence, we're made adaptable. For who of us
Would otherwise survive more than a day or two?

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