

# North of There

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Chris Pusateri

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a dusie chapbook

[These are for the *she* who is you]

1

Some write to grow closer; I write to stay away. I write because print is a distance farther than the miles. Each night I type until neither of us exists—until even the distance between us is unreal. If you think this isn't intimate, you're probably right. I feel it to be a personal failure of sorts—but the failure is his: the me who is he.

2

It is evening, and mine is the only heat in the bed. I don't think of myself as a piece of meat, but when I cut myself I suck and spit, knowing as I do that this is pleasure in another context. In the vertical world, my floor is another's ceiling—but my number begins with one, and that is what we earthbound folk call 'garden level.' I'd tell you a secret—something vulnerable, odds are—if I knew you wouldn't take it so far afield. In the distance, I hear a train whistle (one if by land) and from its fading I can tell it's headed in your direction.

3

I want to sit outside until the good weather goes away. In my favorite season, life fades fast. The nurse insists on rubber gloves because she thinks I haven't given her the whole story. The story I tell isn't untrue—only incomplete.

4

It's 11pm, and from the driving range across the road, I hear golf balls being struck. To focus one's anger on something so white must be a political act. And with one slice to send it into space. I should learn golf, but instead I write it. In either case, it's almost poetry.

5

Longing—and the absence it implies—is the story of us. To learn about longing, one needs read no further than Thomas de Quincey, who knew a thing or two about it. Not the heroin chic of his topic, or his thin hands and delicate complexion, but how, as he lay writhing, his wife asked “Oh, what do you see, dear? What it is that you see?”



6

The continuous present is a beautiful lie. The picture I have is old, and remains in a constant state of prosecution, so as to insist on a single version, lovely above all else. Persistent as film, I play it again: "what I long for array," stay away, to this form fidelity: let dust settle, and what settles, let it stay. May you remain in your mother's kimono, and never grow old. This I wish for you, so long as we both shall live.

7

Rain is the forecast, as far forward as anyone can predict. My youth was spent in agri-culture, where weather was a topic of some currency. They say in Seattle that it rains but never pours: a steady intonation that carries away seasons.

When the rain gets warm, you know the end is near: spring and all the strands of tweed soften the vegetation until. Then comes the trial of quiet, the lack, and a silent line as you read: soft static falling as forecast.

8

The grocery receipt documents hunger and my inability to fill it. What recurs will return—a potential much discussed. Since we are in different time zones, you seem a bit older today, in the east which is our elder by. I look on the map for the point which bears your name: for the rock that signifies you. Thus I cannot drive a canyon or walk a quarry without reading each stone as history—a message without a mouth. So I'll tell you I'm hungry without saying what for. But from these lines we know which years were feast and which ones famished. We let the documents speak for us.

9

It's hard to go on entertaining oneself. This statement is derivative without being evocative, which is the textbook definition of boring. I entertained myself a lot as a child; now an adult, I find it difficult to go on doing so. Maybe my fickle attentions anticipate my movements: seems I can't change quickly enough to suit them. Stories are only as good as the language that relays them, and it seems that for some time now, no surprises have lain in wait. The bus comes at 10, 30, and 50 after the hour: this we know, yet we run to catch it. Sometimes our movements hold it transfixed, and the morning brings a minor triumph. And sometimes its wake flavors the day's remainder, and no language will hold it.

10

Less of you to love is not weight loss, but loss solely, impermanent as all longing is not or wasn't. I'd push through were you here to have me, though there's air and therein a comparison. Nothing has come close to killing me today, and that's luck: good or ill. Sickness is what life tithes when there's nothing in my experience. So going is a step (albeit small) a dotted line awaiting a name. We agree to grieve what can't repair, an authored knot to transmit kisses—the volume knob, a contrast I'd adjust. No focus: details breathe and carry you beyond the borders of my expertise. You are not yourself today, and that frightens me—yet I mark your words, such as they are, hoping I will love what comes of them.

Author's note | When I moved from Boulder to Seattle in July 2003, my longtime partner Michelle Naka Pierce remained in Colorado. During this period, we wrote poems to one another as a means of cultivating intimacy. Michelle's companion volume *Beloved Integer* is available from Bootstrap Productions/PUBLUSH for those interested in her side of the exchange.

North of There was printed in June 2007  
in Boulder, Colorado  
in a limited edition of 117 copies.  
Text is in Georgia, cover titles are in Modern No. 20.  
Paper is Passport Talc.