

cast. The mythologies they devise to account for these perceptions are oft remarked in the literature.

— Robert Nagler

Oxford PA

PARANOIA

I am up on the ridge with strong glasses watching this guy. He walks around the land real slow, talking to himself. I can tell this because his mouth moves and he himself is not eating.

Sometimes he walks up to trees and stares at them, if you can imagine that.

In the meadow yesterday he spent time dancing, you might say.

First, he stomps down grasses with his feet, then he parts the stuff to stare at the ground, and then he lies back in the bed he's made, sucks on a stem and sleeps for half an hour.

He gets distracted by the birds, mostly, but also by noises of all sorts and types. Cocks his head at clouds, wind, airplanes passing, just about everything. Listening for what. Maybe me. Maybe

he hears me breathing. Couldn't possibly, but this is a weird guy. Every now and then he shades his eyes and searches the horizon. Sometimes he wears a wide brimmed hat so I can't tell where he's looking. Maybe

he's looking for me. Out of a clear sky he'll sit down suddenly, on a rock, on the bare ground, wherever, and look around. Who knows? Why am I watching this guy, anyway? If it were me, I'd sure have a funny feeling someone behind a tree somewhere, up on a ridge had an eye out on me, was keeping track, telling.

Like the other day, he suddenly got down and crawled deep into the buckbrush where I lost sight of him. Stayed there all morning. I wondered why would a grown man want to get down in that stuff and get himself all scratched up like that. I've been in buckbrush and believe me, only light gets in there without scratches and not much light at that.

Crazy bastard. Damn near lost my patience,
waiting for him to come out of there. Christ,
you'd think that he was hiding, or something,
needed some time alone, or something.

AUGUST THIRTY-FIRST, NINETEEN EIGHTY-NINE

— for Kerouac

Going up I-5 with the windows closed and the tape deck
going;
Cannonball Adderly blowing his ass off in a studio in
L.A. in 1962
like he knew
an 8.6 would hit the minute the last note was wrapped.

And California, languid against the windows
of my '87 Subaru with Cruise Control, tapping
against the windshield like insects to prove
there's nothing to be afraid of.

A steady 70 MPH gloss over the tectonics of Lassen and
Shasta
and the auto-reverse turns the tape over to Lee Morgan
playing like he knew that the woman with the gun
was waiting for him at the bar when the set was over.

All those guys going for the moon, clean and pure,
no more hedging bets, no more
getting rich in the movies, platinum records;
this is the place; this is it, man;

a feeling, going down the road, coming across the faults;
the twentieth century, man; the 9.2 around the bend;
the feeling;

fresh air light as a lover over fresh land; the blue sky
shrink-wrapped and stretched over brand new history;
hills pushed up still smelling of tar,
mountain ranges like cake, black glass caves still cold,
red clay still warm,
buck-tooth tigers and hairy elephants hiding in oak groves,
redwoods everywhere like baby fuzz;

making it up as it goes along and fuck the rest;
those chinese guys throwing beautiful poems into streams,
those indians dying only on good days,
those black guys standing up and playing regardless
who's listening;

something in the fresh air that oozes from the faults;
adolescent gas; it tickles, it hurts;