



OTHER SIDE

Travis
Jeppesen





The Voice

He was convinced, sincerely, by the notion that one could travel furthest by simply staying put, sitting still. That, contrary to all logic, the mind alone could propel one's entire being through space and time. That the body need play no role in it—movement, travel. That, if anything, the body actually *curtailed* movement. *Prevented* one from travel. So convinced was he by that notion that he vowed to sit there for the next twenty-four hours, without moving an inch. Twenty-four hours became twenty-four years. Throughout that long, near-quarter century, he visited all 195 countries that the planet had to offer—plus a few that no longer exist. His time in each was far from superficial—he got to know them as well as he knew his own, learned their languages and customs. He effectively became a part of them. Once he knew them in this way, essentially becoming a citizen not just of one, but of every country in the world, all without having moved an inch, then he could finally retire altogether from the world, get up and move around once more—in a state of permanent exile.

Other Side

I woke up on the other side. I almost forgot how I'd gotten there. Then, I remembered the plane. Planes're the one way to get to the other side these days. The airlines pretty much have a monopoly on the flat Earth. I can't wait until the day arrives when someone'll decide to flip it over. I like butter and maple syrup on mine.





Embalmed in a Hotel

I like cities where there's no such thing as silence. Where the cityness rudely and sexually juts itself out in front of yr face, constant. The roar of traffic assaults yr synapses, the confusion of crowds molests yr sense of direction. Where to move, who to care about. Bulbous blur of the motion machine. Place where you don't have to worry about who to vote for. That feeling of placelessness. Placeless cityness.

I like being forced to retreat. Ideally, to a hotel room, with its climate control and its desk to write on. With its bedsheets to destroy. Place where I can lie and be dead. Beyond those walls and the ceiling of my corpse: all that aliveness offering itself up unrevised.

Bangkok

I so love how I don't belong to anything—how freeing it all is.

I burned my passport upon arrival and now I have no identity.

I love the sky the most on those polluted days, when it appears to have something to say.

The world is shrinking and I am fast enough to inhabit it.

The city was bigger than the entire world.

I went to the city to get lost in it.

Surrendered to the heat. Heat breeds stasis; this heat is unusual, spurring endless movement.

The movement's a graceful ballet, the dancers gorgeous and unowned by any choreography.

I made a commitment to this place, to myself. To the self that I had suddenly become.

Stay lost here.





Back Home

He had come back, he now realizes, without really knowing why, he had no more ties to the place, this city, this country that had birthed him, everyone he once cared about here was either dead or moved away, scattered, whether it was their mortal remains or their living, physical bodies, and even before, he had not seen most in years, decades even, and so there was no real reason to come back, none that he could measure, and so he looks to the sky, tries to dredge up nostalgic memories, thinking that perhaps the memories might stake him to this place, uncover those long lost roots, and yet he couldn't find them, or rather he could, but he does not want to, for the only ones he can really come up with are too painful—the din of shouting voices in other rooms, the sounds of breaking glass, of breaking bones—and then, he realises for the first time, well, not for the *first* time, but it perhaps *feels* like it, for the first time *in a good long while*, all the reasons why he left, why he ran away—if it's correct to say it in that way, for he was an adult when he left, adults

do not run away, they simply leave—and yet, he always felt he was running all these years, and he was exhausted by it, the exertions of getting away from this very landscape—with its trees and grass and hills and squirrels and occasional deer walking amongst it all looking confused—the landscape he looks at now and realizes he must get away from once again—to some other place, it doesn't matter where—far, far away, and this time, he will never come back, for even though he is and will continue on living, probably for some time longer, he must become like the scattered ashes of the deceased he once hated, hated when they lived, their ashes scattered in the wind, he must allow the wind to carry him to some place without a name so that when he looks he cannot even find himself on a map... yes, *that* is where he wants to be.

