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Remember Chicago

Bill Lynch
Concordia University - Portland

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REMEMBER CHICAGO

Bill Lynch

Remember Chicago:
 cracked steps and broken bricks?
 Plastic signs above darkened windows,
 tape on the windows, tape on the mufflers.
 Picking up Jim Carroll's poetry
 and a hardcover Rimbaud,
 losing my car in the narrow streets
 where your friend used to squat
 before becoming a ghost writer
 for a self-help millionaire?
 Remember, I found some new clothes
 in those thrift stores of broken vases
 and empty frames. Your friend
 kept her pipe in the sugar
 and had never heard the first side
 of *Exile on Main Street*. Remember.
 We brushed by Rushmore to get there,
 drove past Little Big Horn in the dark,
 windows down, listening to Red Red Meat,
 breathing in the damp air
 that flushed through the Honda.
 Your friend listened to us
 laugh ourselves to sleep, her books
 stacked tight and neat above our heads.
 Chicago was rows of brick
 and the law school kid who explained
 that there was no Chicago pizza.
 In her darkened apartment
 we generously pried open
 the shell of her computer,
 drunk and fumbling,
 the solder dabs like the lampposts
 of a city far below,
 muted under dust.

In the end we figured
 it was static from our hands,
 yours and mine, that shorted
 out a chip, leaving her saved work
 lost in a dead end circuit.

Why we couldn't have stayed I don't recall.
 We scarfed burritos with green sauce,
 drank bottled lager from Prague,
 slept on a clean sheet in the spare room
 of a lonely artist in waiting.
 Yes, I suppose we wanted to go home,
 to Los Angeles, Russian mobsters
 above you, to the neighbor woman
 inside out with Tourette's,
 to the Armenian prostitute
 who leaned against the corner mailbox.

But couldn't we have tried to stay,
 to remember too well the heat,
 and the on-ramps and taco stands,
 that we lost track of time
 and broke down for a while
 in the dusty brick room in Chicago?