

Tidepools 1997

Crossing Borders



A loop of asphalt divides our yard from an open field of gold grass and chin-deep fennel. On our side a rabbit swivels its ears carefully forward, sniffing licorice and the intoxicating perfume of other rabbits. Across the blacktop a coyote waits without impatience for the rabbit's decision, its eyes winking WALK-DON'T WALK.

Cape Canaveral looks toward the sea; people sometimes park their trucks along the causeway and watch the space shuttles take off, leaning on their hoods and drinking beer out of quart bottles. Every once in a while someone will say, to no one in particular or to the blue air, Well, that's it. I'm outa here. And you think they mean they're going home but later on you find out they're living in Budapest or somewhere, and suddenly you think Why not?

Not that Budapest is always tranquil. Right now, for instance, in an apartment more or less near the Danube, a stonemason is winding up to say something to his wife that she'll never be able to forget. Even though it's never occurred to him before and in forty-eight seconds he won't even mean it, she'll think that's what he's always felt and she'll burst into tears, and in the morning before she has time to feel pitiful she'll buy a bus ticket and that will be that. If he says what he's winding up to say.

Are we almost there? The boy's father gave him a granola bar but he's too excited to gnaw on it. Bundled up in his yellow slicker on the deck of the Skipjack, he peers west toward Amchitka Island. His father says that somewhere near here is the Date Line, where Monday becomes Tuesday, back and forth, as many times as you want. You could have two birthdays in a row, or two Christmases. Two Christmases! The boy wiggles with a happiness so vivid he can hardly breathe, waiting for the Line to appear in the water. He



knows it will look exactly like an otter's tail.