

## Alaska Highway

April 20, 2017 | 10:32 p.m.

Seven hundred and sixty clicks with only one close call, an arrow sign misread, collision neatly missed. Ages since I'd seen another car, but straight into my flicker of confusion drove a truck, I'm guessing a Dodge Ram. It is always a Dodge Ram. On my ass in morning traffic, passing me reckless in storms. What is it that bursts inside the chest, fires in the plexus, when real horror skitters by? A ball of heat that heaves. My legs began to shake. I could not let the Dodge define my day, though it was my mistake. Averted, yes. I got away. So near to the summit, having come through cloud, snowy peaks of the Seven Sisters settling in mind. Why are they so named? For me they summon Pleiades. I'd wanted this drive perfect, proof that I could make it on my own through narrow gaps and keep control in spite of being gobsmacked by the ranges. Ridges. Eminences. Domes.

I sat in Skagway gathering myself: that disappointment, imperfection, not dissuade. The town was still half-shuttered and I had to pee. I thought I'd cry. I thought I'd have to squat somewhere, to hide, until the fire hall let me in. Look: doors will still swing open in those final moments, when it counts. The owner of a bakery, the Lemon Rose, saved me with a sandwich. I was starved. Her kindness and her coffee. Everything she knew about her business and her world.

I tried to let the Dodge dissolve, but it is with me still, though shadowy, in dust, swallowed up by mountain. Just a wraith. A meaningless misgiving, signifying nothing, gone the way of glaciers. Going. Going.

Just now, I peered in at my youngest, sound asleep, and saw him roll onto his back and stretch. He made a little sound of peace, a little mouthy noise, a baby sigh. I could so easily have woken him and spoiled it. I could so easily have died of ill-timed error on the highway to Alaska, on a hurried search for something to inspire transformation, change of course.

I love this little boy. That love hits like a vista after hairpin when you shirk the corset of steep rock and narrow road to see the nimbus shot with sunlight sketching mountaintops above a marbled pool.

The eyes of both my sons are marbled pools.

I stopped again in Carcross, headed back from Skagway, and I watched the swans just being, near to shore. On a strip of beach, I found a dime and let that be enchantment. Sure enough. As one hour is enchanted, so another. No paucity of smooth stones to bring home, not that we need many.

I gathered driftwood also, took two steps and turned to see another vista. One I almost missed. I stood and raised my arms like swan wings in the late-day, water-kissing sun. One baby step and nothing looked the same.

I could see a bridge slung shore to shore, held by a great mountain in reflection shot with light, and all the spiraling potential of its span. Innumerable crossings in one thought.

I stood a good long time upon that gently rocking dock.