



The Weakerthans

Left and leaving

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“Left and Leaving”

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07/2000

G7 Welcoming

Committee

Saint Anthony and the Ten Thousand Things

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Memory will rust & erode into lists of all that you gave me.

A blanket I slept restless beneath, between art school dropout arms. The hard wood floor, the howl of the passing freight train that woke me. The church steps I sat on & that tattered Kerouac I read while dawn burned

the summernight mist off Ohio fields. The air, wet & redolent with sweetgrass; bees droning & tumbling in the wildflowers. The steps of a church in Chicago. A four a. m. heady with lilacs, sky the color of lilacs, the hush

of the city. The leather jackets he & I wore. Tugs at one another's collars. Pillowly lips, bitten red. *Some matches*—a souvenir from some bar or diner, or bought from a gas station. The unsmoked back half of a preacher's son's

honey-laced cigarette, which tasted not of honey but was the closest to kissing him I was allowed to get. French cigarettes shared with a beat poet-boy in Montreal. The smoke I tried to quit but instead welded to my lips when they were

lonely for kisses. The cigarette butts I left in trails behind me across the U. S. & Canada. O Canada. Boys & cigarettes. Girls & weed. Rum to whiskey, beer to blackberry wine. Schnapps & SoCo. The pills I swallowed to try & dull

the frantic ache in my chest. *The best parts of lonely*: the cracked backyards of northern Illinois flashing by outside the windows of the Metra train. City streets, watercolored by rain & sewer-smoke, seen from the windows of dive bars

& diners. The skylines of barely-breathing cities & towns growing closer as I pushed my car forever toward new horizons, new loves. Skylines fading in the rearview as I left love-horizons behind. Everything sad, swaying alone in my room to forlorn

crooners pressed into record-grooves. *Duct tape & soldered wires*, a Miranda Sensomat camera, endless notebooks & chewed-on pens. Lucky Strikes, cursed baseball teams, broken photocopiers. *New words for old desires*. Whiskey-lips & tender

limbs. The bridge over the train yard. Bad behaviour. Holy hearts painted on the backs of naked friends. Broken glass & calloused hands. *Every birthday card I threw away & every blue valentine I tried too hard to hold*. That December almost-birthday

in Philadelphia when I heard someone say: "Tony, Tony, come around, for what is lost cannot be found." I find myself talking to you, too, now that all of it is gone. Help me, Saint Anthony, to find the pirate radio station & the skull & crossbones ring. The

skinny ties & studded bracelets, the scars & bruises. The blue-dust moonlight on the sidewalks & the cobalt bedroom. The northern lights in Michigan & that streetlamp-lit balcony in Toronto. Thunder storm dances, nighttime swingsets, pin-up photoshoots & greasy

spoons. It's all gone, now, the ten thousand things, the dear darkling hours, the yellow lines stitched across highways. The mix tapes made by pen pals. That one perfect mix tape with that one perfect song—the anthem-ballad that asked me to choose *who's left, &*

who's leaving. But I didn't get to decide what I would lose. I did not choose my memoir heart, my list-of-loss making hands. My lips forever whispering: I miss everything all the time. Je suis haaté. Je me souviens. C'est comme ça. Saint Anthony,

I'm trying not to wonder where you are.