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Simon Harsent

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Issue #4

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The Valley *by* Simon Harsent —

Down The Road *by* Adam Rivett —

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Down The Road

by

Adam Rivett.

I'll be standing in front of something formidable or strange or delicate and will be unable to name any of it. When presented with the world's variety I'll offer it nothing but a bafflement of language. And yet I'll go, and live with my uncertainty, if not my outright stupidity. The land will have to forgive me, having no other option.



He swipes left, left again. It's here somewhere, ah, yep, here it is. You really had to be there, he says, and makes a noble effort with thumb and index finger to restore some grandiosity to the photo. Ah but really you had to be there, he says, zooming in on the sublime and uncapturable and merely reducing the now unexplainable to pixels. You just had to be there.

I'll be there and never speak of it again,
accepting I once again do not have the
words. I'll go there and be there and re-
turn home and be home and not once
at any point in any future gathering or
even workplace coffee when the ques-
tion of weekends spent and travel re-
cently made arises will I mention an-
ything about where I will go or what I
will see or what others around me must
do, must see.



So you know David, right? To this question I nod, and having seen that and established sufficient connection to a past that might temporarily bind us, he proceeds, though if I was being honest it might be better to say, accurately, that I knew David. But he doesn't need to know that, and I likewise do not need to probe him on the man he knows, or thinks he does. So what's David up to these days anyway?













A train is too prosaic, and a walk there is impossible. I'll drive. I'll rent a car, something robust enough for the journey inwards. I'll pierce the land's outer shell – gates and boundaries and hills – and move inwards from there. I'll leave the rental in a car park poorly kept and rarely used, the sort of place created to be captured in a photograph marked: "disappeared last seen here". At best crossing the path of a more experienced camper or walker, both otherwise seeing no-one, my co-ordinates verified by nothing. No phone, no electronics.



Yeah David, yeah yeah yeah, not entirely sure. His response to this, a nod and a quick exhalation of agreeance, is all that's required. David at some point earlier in his life – when he knew me, and this man I'm still yet to be formally introduced to – was always, clearly, the wandering type. What you might term our friendship – whatever the exact term for a fondly remembered housemate is – was regularly interrupted by escapes, deviations, unannounced calls. From where? And for how long? Yeah David, sure, why not indeed?

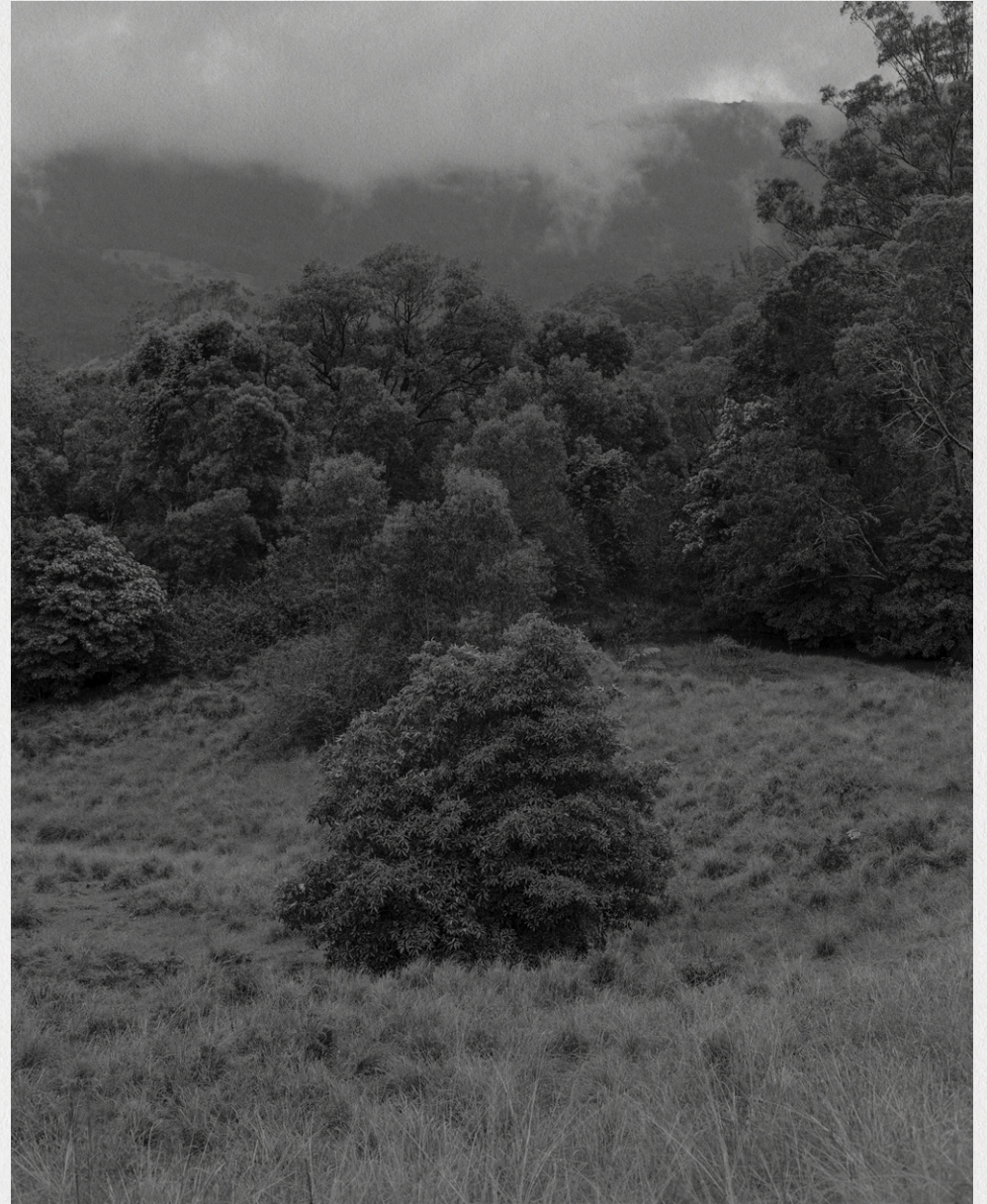
What it is that leads you here is harder to say. You'll see the digital bloom of a plant that no real world would permit – something cold and hard and overabundant on the side of a building selling you medicine or insurance or skin care – and that will be that: the law of replacement. Unsatisfying metaphors. Something true must now suffice, be sought. You'll crave, be restless, suddenly dissatisfied. Until this future presumption gains flesh, until the images mean something.



David always did love that song, "L.A. Freeway", did he remember that? He did not. There was something almost corny about its desire for countrified escape – gonna get me some dirt on my feet, etc. – but the melody and arrangement were undeniable, and David's sincerity of belief carried you the rest of the way. The whole album playing again and again, permissible bleed from the next door bedroom. The principles of his life made the song so. When loving a song becomes a statement of intent. Oh so you've never heard of Guy Clark? How long did you know David for anyway? Oh right. Well anyway.

You'll walk where trees grow fear-
some and unmoveable from the land,
the summation of a millennia's patient
work. Small insistence of water, hid-
den insistence of animal life. You'll
see it present itself to you, and you're
shocked at the sincerity of your reac-
tion, future to present, the imagined to
the actual. You'll walk; no, you walk.
You walk, and there's footsteps near-
by. Undisclosed visitor or your own
in curious echo. Crunch of something
underfoot. Once seeing from there to
here, and now here, and seeing from
the new present to something up ahead.
You walk and see, and capture the vi-
sions privately. And you'll never tell or
comprehend.







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