

Disorientteering

by Fred Osuna

We leave at dusk in a borrowed car, two of us, driving from Boston to the border, our only stop a package store in New Hampshire for liquid provisions. At night, on these New England roads, there is no light, no pink sodium-vapor glow, no guideposts. Just dense, thick darkness, all shades of black marshaled together, pushing back against the paltry spark of our headlights.

Once we cross into Québec, there is nothing.

Our instructions: drive two miles due north and bear left at the crossing. In the murk, we see no crossing, no markings, no turnoff. We are unaware that miles in this country are not a standard unit of measurement.

We soldier on into the alien midnight.

We ascend on a narrow, rutted, winding road, iced and bumpy, moving at 10 mph or less.

The heater fails.

Another hour passes. I can see my breath. Gene pisses in his water bottle and passes it to me, a hand-warmer to help loosen my death grip on the wheel.

Around 4 a.m., the road winds downward. I feel we're heading south. As the sun begins its soft glow, I see a sign to our destination. 1.5 km from us, it sits, glowing at the base of a network of runs, all converging like a natural pointer saying, HERE IT IS!

In the distance, Gene spies the border arcade — the one we apparently missed — while I imagine the comfort of walking on hot coals, a shower, French toast.

