

# Texarkana

*by* Jeff Questad

Nothing else at night, so I watch the lights ahead evolve, galaxy floating on sparkling water, cluster of flaming bees, landing lights, then finally into form as fast food signs, bright red and a yellow that stings eyes dilated in darkness. Food. Gas. Hospital. The signs are illegible until it's too late to exit, so we just don't.

I quietly search the dial. There's no music in Dallas, only Christian talk shows. I settle on one with the voice like that actor you said you love/hate/love. The radio goes from AM to FM with a twist and the voice is at the end, half in one band, half in the other. Try Jesus, the voice says. If you don't like him, Satan will take you back. It begins to rain, then it stops raining, and it will go on like that for the rest of the way.

Greenville isn't green at night. It's grey. We fall in behind a truck pulling a boat with the name Marie - your name, a sign - written in reflective letters on the back. I try to focus on the red of his taillights, then just follow them down off the highway. The offramp is sloped so I grip the dash as we list starboard. In your sleep, you grab the seat, like you're falling. In the damp, greenless streets of Greenville there will be something to drink.

You sleep while I go in. There's a sweet liqueur priced to sell on the counter. The man snaps a brown bag open with a whip of one hand. You came down from the highway, that much I can guess, the man says. The stuff I bought smells like licorice even before I unscrew the cap.

He asks, but are you coming from or going to?

We glide, with minimal turbulence, through Mt. Pleasant. There's no mountain. I don't know what's pleasant about it. Thirty minutes

later, there it is.

A giant red neon cross, high on a hill, seeming to float ahead of us in the sky. I intend to follow it all the way into Texarkana, but soon the church is to my right, then behind us, then gone. I lay back in my cockpit and take another drink. Looking over, your eyes are still closed. We hit the city and in a minute I pull over by a sign that says we are near food, gas and a hospital. I vomit, leaving the contents of everything we consumed in Texas on the road.

I could show you where on the map this happened. I could show you exactly where I decided things. It was half in the state and half out. But even now, home, your eyes are still closed, like you have faith you're safe with me.

