

Story for Travis Who Is Leaving

By Allison Fine

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"When you are courting a nice girl an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder a second seems like an hour. That's relativity."

-Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Travis is a traveler. He is going to move out to the west—to the great wide way where the water glistens like tiny fluid rocks bouncing and shining on waves, where people weave in and out of the fantasy of reality and the reality of fantasy, where everyone pays too much and gets too little—but he is dreaming, like they all do, that he would pay little and get much and perhaps he will.

Some do.

Travis is moving to L.A. and there he will make his way on the great sand castles of the way. In 1853 there was an adobe hut that stood in the Nopalera field, after the Nopal Cactus that lived in that valley long before the valley became Hollywood. Now it is so many centuries later and Travis is going to make like a cactus, storing water, not needing to be fed too much, for a long time at least, until it is proper or dreamy or ready or just the time when somebody will look and say: "what is that cactus standing there?" and a voice will say, "it's the Travis Traveling Cactus Indigenous from somewhere else but transplanted here." They will cluck and exclaim at how exotic it is and take it into consideration with other things that Travis wishes for.

Many things does Travis wish for.

In the sky over the desert that is now L.A. there are dark moments and many stars. Too many dreams to repeat. Some are very funny. Travis wishes to make them laugh with the funny dreams. But the question is: who are they?

Travis is moving to L.A.

He will think about Chicago—the humid nights of summer, the dark and bursting trees, many colors of the fall, the glistening streets of State Street and Michigan avenue after rain, the cold snow on the ground trudging down California after too many drinks, those strange blooming music producing rods dotting State Street just outside the clock on Macy’s. What was happening after everything changed just before he left? More people, less funkiness, empty store-fronts giving way to Hipster business, young people aging into middle age. Inside the “L” the benches filled with tourists, suddenly empty in November, those lights on houses; the pumpkins on the porch, many pumpkins; many porches, kids wearing their costumes in Walgreens.

While he is sitting on the top of the Hollywood hills watching the lights of all that stuff below, he is going to miss Chicago for those things I have mentioned, and many more I know nothing about.

He is going out to the west and perhaps he will drive up the coast and see the great Redwoods and become dwarfed by beings bigger, greater and deeper than all of us combined. The sky will open up with clouds and he will be wearing a Tuxedo at an awards show. Many beautiful women will look at him and wonder, *what does his future say to me?* He will wonder the same thing.

Start in Monterey. Think about Kerouac. Visit Carmel. Forget about Clint Eastwood. California Route 1 melds and dips and explodes with nature, wonder, trouble. There is so much trouble in the west. Travis is looking to find it because he wants to tame it. Tame the trouble and make it into words.

Those words that sing.

Trouble may tame him back.

It’s a wrestling match.

Nobody wins or loses.

Big Sur, Redwoods, Santa Lucia Range—what adventure! Then back to L.A. where the room is where the honey starts—the room is where the story drives—he gets into the car of story and drives to—

His future.

Which we do not know.

Because it is bigger than Chicago.

Travis is moving to the west where Chicago will recede and fade and then loom larger than anything he has ever seen—as deep as the Grand Canyon and as high as the John Hancock Center, from which you can see the streets below and all the tiny people.

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