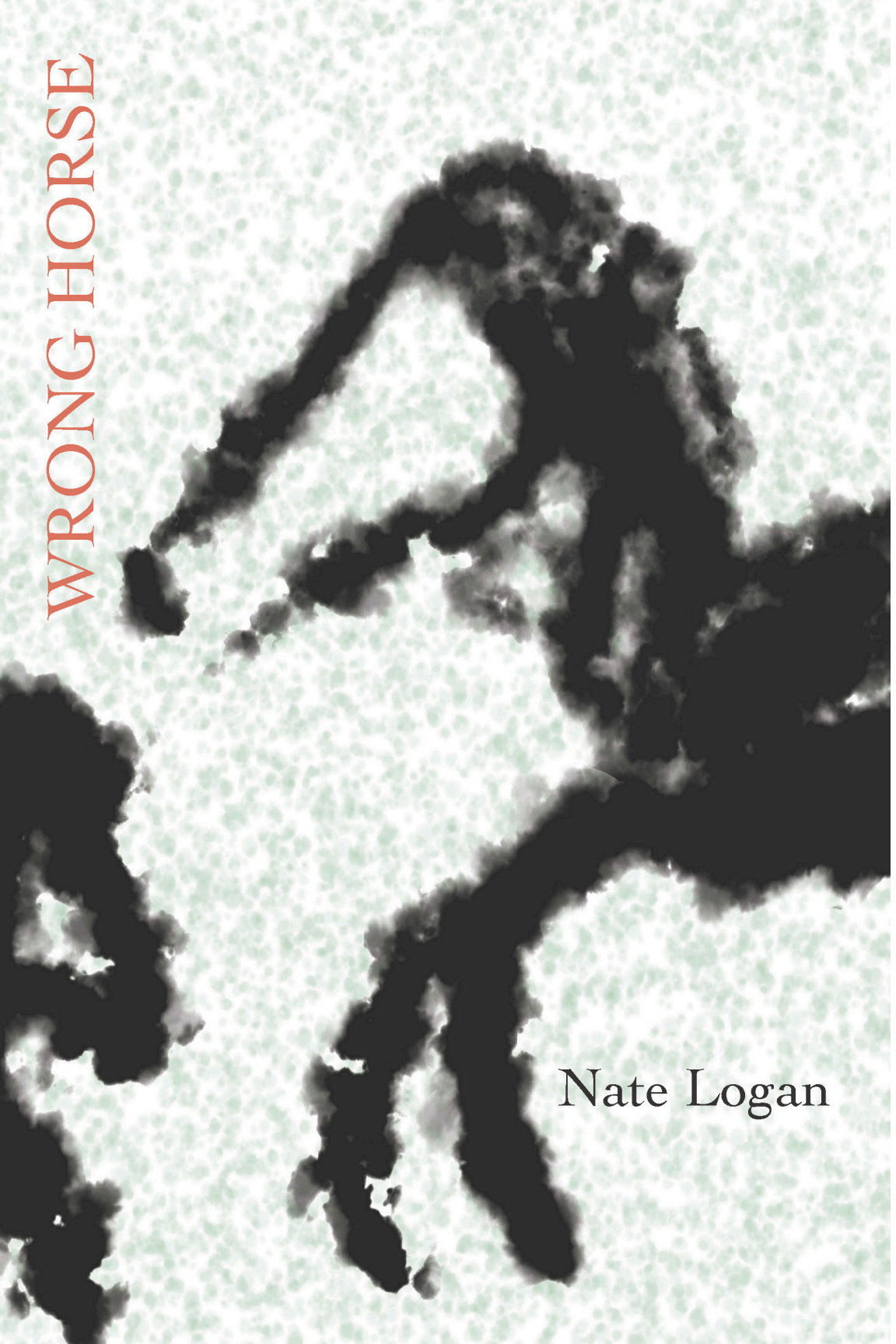


WRONG HORSE

Nate Logan



Wrong Horse

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Acknowledgements and Notes

The trip took two and a half days. They had done it twice now. It seemed about the same each time. They bought peaches and cigarettes and fireworks. The child would often sit on the floor in the front seat and talk into the air-conditioning vent.

“Emergency,” she’d say. “Come in, please.”

— Joy Williams, “The Wedding”

1.

I Got My Mind Set on You

There's a heart on the plane. The gate agent on crutches offers no explanations. Despite this and Jim's treatise on abnormal bird migration patterns, we board. In case things turn ill, we have folded pamphlets and a lit floor. The nearest exit is behind me. Off the ground, a woman in the aisle seat rattles on about an old book, her copy the color of hallucinogenic elephants. Some children attempt a da capo aria (baritone and strings) near first class. In a past life, I was accused of having a one-track mind. In a past life and this one. I swirl my ginger ale. The mini ice cubes collide without end.

Certain Death

The naiveté of a stranger ushers me into town. He says his name is Pete's Dad. On the dashboard is a little white glove with an affinity for hamburger. "This is really beautiful country," he says. "I'm going to walk down to the river." There is no river in sight, but they say everyone you meet knows something you don't. The contents of my knapsack remain a mystery. When the sun's arthritic light hits the window, it becomes a laser beam. If I were holding an ant, it would surely die.

Bucket of Blood

I was strolling downtown in search of a wooden mallet. All my fingers and toes were crossed in natural ways. On my third lap of the square, a septuagenarian stopped me. “Excuse me, are you going to the bucket of blood? That’s where I’m going,” he said. “I’m sorry, the what?” I asked. “The old bucket of blood! It’s what made this town famous.” “I thought jogging shorts put this town on the map,” I said. “Oh, no one in this town has worn jogging shorts for years. It’s all about the bucket of blood now,” he said. “I’m meeting my girlfriend there. She’s visiting from Florida,” he said. “Well, I hope you have a nice time, but I really must find a mallet. You wouldn’t happen to know where I could get one?” I asked. “I wouldn’t know. But if I did, I wouldn’t tell you.” “Why’s that?” I asked. “Anyone who pretends not to know what the bucket of blood is can’t be trusted. That, or he’s just an idiot.” The man shuffled down the sidewalk. About an hour later he was out of sight. Twilight held its crowbar over everyone’s heads.

Ducks and How to Make Them Pay

A fog metaphor descends upon the coffeehouse. A group of teens, noses stuck in their Bibles, don't notice, or notice but don't let on. The local expatriate curses, a lovely earworm. The barista with the ice scraper tattoo pulls on her earlobe in a gloomy sort of way. As a former political science major, I feel ill-prepared for revenge. Declaring embargoes or petitioning outside The International Court of Justice hardly appeals. "Everything is weakness and sickness with Bergman," Charles Bronson once mumbled into a tape recorder. I remember this when I need it the most.

I'll Call You When I Get There

When it was my turn, I told a joke into the wax cylinder recorder. Earlier, Rhiannon pitched a documentary: visiting all seven Applebee's in North Dakota. We nodded solemnly and ate cheesecake. Ellen demonstrated her rowing technique in the middle of the room. She didn't knock one chair over, which elicited a round of applause. Generally, we still had our doubts, but took our wonder where we could get it.

Any Major Dude Will Tell You

“The crossover episode is never a bad idea. Meredith got sent to jail for lopping off Dave’s head. I don’t think that word properly denotes the severity of the action. *Lop*. I’ve got a bar of silver at home collecting dust. After the first day, I knew a philosophy major wasn’t for me. 3-D is overrated and everyone loves it. Believing in nonsense is the same as believing in a car bomb. A workout headband says a lot about a person. Lawnmowers are properly rated. Clu Gulager invented the backflip and demolition derby. This ham is too salty.”

Suburb

The marching band bends the theme from *Cape Fear* in the rain. I'm across the street, hiding from a party in the garage. I could build a canoe or doghouse using only 18th century tools. A tricolor beer is the perfect accompaniment to both my thoughts and Herrmann. Some shuffling inside the house, followed by a thud. There's only one book that can make that sound.

Bingo Card

Boneless Wing Tuesday cheered up nobody. The poets stayed home and tried their hands inventing bad haircuts. Chet took off his shirt and broke the news about his parents. “I’m not crying, you’re crying,” my niece said, practicing her inauguration speech. Then, going out on a limb, “I, too, would like to mourn America’s uncle.” I took two steps outside and knocked over a potted plant, but that was an accident.

Lake Cathleen

The diner's hitching post is rented this morning: a horse, GRIEF stenciled on its hindquarters, grazes idly. "It's not the ocean you hear in a seashell," a child tells the waitress. The history of a pepper sauce reads like a murder mystery. Raincoats drip on a coat rack. We name the puddle Lake Cathleen.

Metal Detecting in The Sideburn State

“Nate,” Dan said, “Have you ever seen a picture of Alan Greenspan?” “Yeah, I’m pretty sure I saw him testifying in front of some subcommittee? Late ’90s?” “No,” Dan said. “I’m not talking about recognizing him on the street. Have you ever seen a picture of the man?” Nate thought for half a second. Less than a half second. “No, I don’t believe I have,” he said. “It is *something else*,” Dan said. They had ditched the well-trodden shoreline and its various wrecked treasure cruises for the local moat. The crocodile with the knife in its head eyed them cautiously. The construction of the moat itself was a contentious issue when first proposed by the ex-ex-governor. Every other word out of his mouth was *flotsam*. The proposal grew in scope after some initial strikes and found its way on two state referendums in back-to-back national elections. When the people rejected it for a second time, they also rejected a second term for the governor. That explains why there’s only one moat in the tri-state area. Dan and Nate circled the moat at a snail’s pace and heard no beeps. The day’s disappearing act just happened. “It’s really *something else*,” Dan said.

Parking Lot

It is Thanksgiving time again. A time for bread and mirth. A to-go container of rolls lay in the parking lot. A turned-over ramekin oozes butter like a wound, elicits crying and angry words. There are no employees outside telling us to “avert our eyes” or that “there’s nothing to see here.” A retired detective retreats to his car for evidence markers. A feeble attempt is made to alert the authorities. Most people enter the Longhorn Steakhouse without blinking.

When I return to the car, there's a flyer on my windshield: another pet rock has run away from home. That makes four in the last week. I examine the picture. I say with confidence, "I have never seen this pet rock."

To avoid fees, many concertgoers park in the restaurant's lot and enjoy the performance from the comfort of their cars. When the band plays the single, most emerge from front seats, climb on their hoods, and dance. A contingent of headbangers occupies the back quarter of the lot. Couples are near the front, slow dancing to machine gun riffs. It's only now, thirty minutes into the show, that I hear the maître d'. "Aren't you going to *do* something?!" I would never get in the way of someone else's happiness. Would not even stick my foot in the door of someone else's happiness. But the maître d' doesn't know this. Because my name is on the door, I need to project a sense of fairness and sternness. My face is a warning sign, the one with the hatchback on two wheels.

At the end of a tough week, I treat myself to some curbside steak, broccoli, and brick of bread. I wait for the bill and see right into the restaurant. A hostess rolls her eyes so far in her head, I feel a little sick. Some child uses a red crayon with disturbing flourish. A slice of cheesecake is put in front of an elderly couple. I'm the only person in the designated to-go parking area. The wind nudges the car with a socked foot.

“When do you think this will blow over?” my wife asked. “I don’t know, honey,” I said. Driving had become impossible, so we pulled into the first parking lot we could. One row over, a plume of tailgating smoke crept upward. A family of five donning local sports team paraphernalia were shouting and eating barbeque. “Looks like some people have already given up...” my wife said. “Honey, let’s not judge,” I said. Though secretly I agreed. More cars pulled in. In a minivan beside us, a prayer circle formed on folded-down backseats. Some fireworks exploded in the sky near the restaurant entrance. “Must be for kids,” my wife said. “Kids will believe anything.” Circumstances had revealed another side of my wife, a side I didn’t know existed. “Parents have to do something, honey. Kids get scared.” My wife waved her hand. “Compromise never did me any favors,” she said. I turned on the radio to lighten the mood, but there was no music. Just people talking without end until they weren’t.

Everything Zen

What I don't know, I can't tell you. And what I do know doesn't amount to a pile of beans. I don't even like beans, isn't that funny? It's all downhill from the mountaintop villages of Switzerland. I didn't think I would've needed a scarf, but I did. There was snow and automatic weaponry hidden under every tree trunk. I was alone.

2.

Fran, Wagging

Some head cheese inches forward on the counter. “Oh, real funny,” I say to Fran, wagging her tail. For the third day in a row people have been talking about Amish beards seized at the post office. No suspects. “Oh, who am I kidding? I know it wasn’t you, Fran.” It feels like I’ve been wearing a suit one size too small my whole life. Russet light casts a shadow play: a whippoorwill makes a phone call; a list of demands is nailed to the door.

Permanent Vacation

The contessa's gone to North Dakota with a sports car, fanny pack, and boots to hike in. I read this news and grip the edge of my beach towel. The lumpy outline of a destroyed castle makes everyone a little worried. I try to imagine the life of a scallop and what lifeguards talk about at parties. Legs fling up through the water like arrows and I'm thinking about the contessa again. We had only been talking for five minutes. "I hear you paint portraits," she whispered. It wasn't untrue.

Sometimes a Pony Gets Depressed Again

Dear Nate,

It'll be a small miracle if this finds you. Did you move to Minnesota? So many people in the Midwest have died this year. I saw something strange the other day: chickens in the farmer's corvette. It made me think of you for obvious reasons. I've started approaching everything in a sort of slouched over manner. It's easier than having to repeat myself. Singing into the showerhead is good practice for the real thing. You should come to karaoke sometime.

Fondly,
Dave

Dear Dave,

You must be a true believer. Fun fact: a loon's eyes change color with the seasons and so do mine. I'm writing this to you on a postcard. You can see a serial killer of some fame opposite this letter at the bottom of a lake. I admit it's a bit morbid, but tourism goes a long way this far north. I once sang "Sea of Love," but I don't think I'll ever do it again.

Nate

Jock Jams, Volume 1

I have to be in the mood to grate nutmeg. I'm not much different from anyone else. But when I put nutmeg *on* my nutmeg... Hearing the jock jams of yesteryear always does this to me. I sway in the kitchen like a wayward scarecrow. Before long I'm dancing with Tamsen (calico, not a natural dancer). When my thoughts drift to the beach ball we threw over the dam, I know the grating is almost done. Something of an end approaches in a 1995 Land Rover and parks on the street.

Parade

I walked out to the barn. It was a day like any other, probably a Wednesday. I checked in on the animals because I'm a responsible person. The chickens were fine. The horses seemed in good spirits, especially Ambulance Driver. I was almost through my daily round when it occurred to me: the asses were gone. No trace. I called their names, "Grumpy? Murky? Needy?" Nothing. The fence wasn't open. There were no tire tracks or hoof prints. Did I even have any asses to begin with? I looked around, but the answer wasn't up the oak or peeking from the birdbath. Lapsed, I went back inside and flipped on the news. There was some capsizing at the boat parade. I poured the largest glass of lemonade in my life, but couldn't finish.

Animal

It's not the water that's taffy blue, but the floor and walls of the high school pool. I always forget this. "It's a small world, but I wouldn't want to paint it" (Steven Wright). I stare into the surface, but I'm barely there. A cat of some acquaintance peers back. She's burping or meowing, trying to tell me something. I reach for a tuft of fur and come away with a chlorine hand. It's right out of a gnawing dream. We've lived alongside animals for thousands of years. Only we wear swim caps.

Pascal's Wager

The local citizen scientist wouldn't shut-up: he ID'd a new species of bird a few years earlier. "Gary," we said, "Gary, give it a rest." Nope. I could set my father's watch to his 15-minute presentations. Drowsy onlookers gathered in Gary's backyard to listen. But soon it was old hat. The scientists in charge came in and decided not to name the new species after Gary, which is what we suspected he wanted all along. By his own admission, he was not a lifelong birder. Gary wanted to be immortal and for that we never forgave him.

I've Been to Duluth

I needed a log carrier, spit & polish, and ushanka. The automatic doors opened to a jalopy from my youth. Earthy smells meandered over every flannel table. The retirement cardigan was on display, a stone's throw from a water bottle pyramid. Seeing this, a fog rolled in and down my face. Was I sleepwalking? "Can I help you find something today?" someone asked. Across the store, a woman stacked Wiffle bats on her shoulder. Someone else stood in front of a mirror, opening and closing a pocket knife.

I've Been to Places Other than Duluth

I stood in front of the Norwegian Cultural Emporium and tossed my pocket knife on the roof. Surprise! They let me in with my agrarian ponytail. The blood eagle diagram made me question my own philosophy and gave me a stomachache. The Oseberg replica enthralled the children; they fought with foam axes on the stern. The ones who died did so in dramatic fashion, gurgling and vowing revenge. All historical excursions end in the gift shop. Surrounded by coffee mugs like the Vikings themselves used. I did not come from humble folk.

Diner

The hamburger historian goes on and on about Connecticut. When I think about it, “Diana” has never been the name of any waitress.

It's All Greek to Me

First date idea: picnic on the crumbling steps of the Parthenon. They take reservations, you ask. Hermes was a Nike guy, I ask. How does our favorite short story writer keep her old horse car running? We theorized into the twilight. You tossed back grapes and shouted at the other tourists: Tremble mortals! That made me laugh so hard, I cried a river. You pulled an oar out of your purse, the work already done.

The Salton Sea

Our first date had gone so well, I proposed another. “I would love that,” she said. And so I picked her up at 6pm that Thursday and drove to the cold climate species zoo. At the red panda exhibit she asked, “Where’s one place you’d love to visit, but haven’t?” “That’s a tough one. Ask me again when we get to the Sichuan Takin?” I said. “Sure,” she said. Then, “Me, I’d love to visit the Salton Sea.” From what I knew about the Salton Sea, it sounded like the worst place on Earth: ’50s resort architecture, a shore lined with fish bones, reeking of death. “You know, it’s only a little over a day’s drive from here...” She sipped from a souvenir cup. It had a little otter on it, also going upriver.

The Home Stretch

I'm on my way home. In the home stretch, as they say. A mannequin with a push broom mustache appears in my rearview. Its mouth open enough for a golf ball or string of handkerchiefs. The radio tells me that this is the driest September in 20 years. I suppress a sniffle for my plants, the ones still alive. Behind my house is a graveyard gathering dust. In the mirror, the mannequin has disappeared. It's not unheard of to imagine things in traffic. To spend the equinox in a hammock, wasting my life. Or not breaking the backs of mothers walking a Weimaraner. And there's the mannequin again with an egg in its mouth.

Ypsilanti, Baby!

I'm sitting at my desktop and click "travel" on the welcome screen. Earlier, in line at the chandlery, my dreams seemed small. A man ran a candle under his nose like a cigar. A woman, unsatisfied with coin flips, asked each browser, "What do you think would look better in the library, this candelabra or this medieval torch?" She wafted toward me and in a panic, I dropped the antique snuffer. I discovered that it was OK to live without complications: a picture of Kim Cattrall on the bridge wearing nothing but pointy ears.

Tornado Siren

The auditorium door shuts like an old coffin. I'm on stage holding a piece of coffee cake and Dolores, head in hand, lies on her stomach (stage left). Eight hands apply sunscreen to her back; many critics have speculated on the significance of this. In the final act, the tornado siren rings and Dolores and I sit on a beach towel waiting for it to roll in. The front row regularly tents their ears. "One man's mustard is another man's masterpiece."

Field Notes

Ominous *whooshing* coming from the junior high dumpsters.

*

The employees in the florist shop are all named after flowers: Violet at the register, Rose as a consultant, Azalea digging a hole across town.

*

People who push their pets around in strollers gather at the park; I'm there, introducing everyone to Cortez the Killer.

*

The detective said a half-completed game of Duck, Duck, Gray Duck was the illuminating clue.

*

More than one person on the plane had a drum machine.

*

The museum's collection of ceramic ashtrays elicits tears even from the fiercest motorcycle gangs, but everyone goes home with a smile.

*

Elizabeth pointed at her watch as the long con entered its second week of unfurling.

*

Pangs of guilt as I cut the baroque tape with a takeout knife.

*

The president said, “Alligator, alligator! Eat ’em up, eat ’em up!” but we weren’t sure whom he was threatening.

*

While driving the snow blower, getting closer to the divine.

*

Once in a blue moon I receive an email from someone I don’t know asking if we’re running laps today. That kills me.

3.

Crockpot

1) You pulled a blueprint from your back pocket. It looked like a Greek column from the den and a dog hotel from the couch. Art thou bored? Maybe a moot point. To my surprise, some nautical maneuvers worked on land. You demonstrated them (all passion, no technique); you made it look easy. Nothing was easy for Tchaikovsky and look what he did.

2) Idea for a statue: a runner with folded arms at second base. Any pizza with pineapple we still call Hawaiian. Something is wrong. I don't want to work, I just want to lounge in my presidential bathrobe all day.

3) My embalmer friend of 25 years is smoking a pipe when I see him. The pipe belonged to a beloved prime minister. "I'm surprised that's not in a museum," I say. We talk like this for some time. Another hurricane spins like a divining top toward the country. Egyptologists, their superstitions leak into our hearts although we know better.

4) Gossip about a trebuchet. Samantha, on one crutch, egging us on.

5) Ambitious network TV event miniseries were what the neighborhood was missing this whole time. A double dare saw me walk across an iced over lake. Yes, I fell on my ass, but that was not the worst of it, Peter Weller.

Mason & Dixon

“I’m not afraid of you and will beat your ass,” the malapert surveyor says. I’m traversing The Wedge in an oversized UPenn sweater. “I have no ill intentions,” I say. “Just checking things out.” “Things here were settled in 1921 and that’s how they’ll stay,” the other surveyor says. Earlier, I let my café au lait turn lukewarm in my hands. Conversations about the various wigs of the Founding Fathers. Foreshadowing is betting on the wrong horse.

Raising Hell

He was an ordinary baby, if a little aloof. Blessed with no extraordinary features, his cheeks seemed to resist pinching. Like every baby, he enjoyed eating dirt and pulling anthologies off the shelf to drop on the floor. Maybe he slept more than the average baby, but it never rose to the level of concern. Mashed prunes were his favorite food. Our child would amaze friends and strangers alike. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen such a peaceful baby. You’re so lucky!” Mary said. And at the aquarium, the usually stoic marine biologists would break into happy tears as we strolled through the exhibits. Now that I think about it, there were usually waterworks wherever we went. My wife and I never cried. We were generally happy and enjoyed being parents, but crying seemed excessive. Things went along with little excitement, very plain, like our baby. But before we knew it, our baby was a child excelling in grade school penmanship, then an adolescent with a penchant for political theory. “Your child is remarkable,” Mr. Huffner, the social studies teacher told us at a parent-teacher conference. “He thinks in three dimensional terms. Do you talk about politics at home?” “Oh, not at all,” my wife said. “We kind of leave him alone to his own devices. I couldn’t tell you the last time I saw the news.” “Well, he’s a very remarkable young man. You should be very proud.” Most interactions with his teachers were like this. And yes, of course we were proud of our son, but we didn’t have anything to do with it, not really. He had a full mustache by his freshman year of high school. It started a bit of a trend according to the local paper. Though he could’ve been, he wasn’t part of any sports team. He played violin in the school orchestra and practiced with a dedication I’d rarely seen. During his final performance, there was an extended pause where his bandmates, the conductor, and the entire audience cried at his playing. I checked my watch. My wife discreetly started a new piece

of spearmint gum. We sat among the weepers, but were not with them.

Palm Beach State College Stairwell is How I Heard This Song

It was a dark time in my life: I was between phone plans and Linda refused to take my cilantro allergy seriously. It was all I could do to tear down the Xerox fliers pairing me with the thing in the art department basement. I'd end each day by counting my real friends on one hand. Thankfully, weeks later, the whole thing blew over. Attention had the shelf life of deli turkey in this town. I was thinking about this when I tripped and fell down the stairs. Someone kneeled beside me and took off their headphones. Something muffled, yet beautiful, meandered in my ears—there were trumpets? I think there were trumpets.

Rubberneck

You are pointing at your ears. Not just pointing though. Emphatically pointing. I think you are inventing this pointing gesture in real time. I'm imagining a little creek: the straight line from your ruby index finger to your ear canal; this has to be some pointing that has never before occurred on Earth. I'm glad I'm not the only witness to this miraculous pointing gesture. It will certainly be added to the lauded list of great points: Nixon at the mirror, Cleopatra at the rack of lamb, etc.

We Have Fun, Don't We?

1.

“How about that? Kind of a knife right over the heart,” Susanne said. Some of the flagship sauce had dripped on my Maine jacket. She was tracing a dagger with her dominant hand, dipping bread in oil with the other.

2.

The player piano put through its paces. Our waiter quickly told us his life story. The safe word stuck to the bottom of a crypto bro's shoe. Murmurs bumping the chandelier. A night full of open eyes.

No One Asked

The eyes of 1979 belong to Meg Foster; I'm sorry, I don't make the rules. Spend a week or two controlled by a Davis Weather Station. The TV psychic was brought in because how much could it hurt. No one's going to tell me I have to give up my landline phone. Already halfway out the door. At brunch, someone at the next table says something now has a "life of its own." That's usually when the rug gets pulled out, the other loafer drops, etc. When I get to my car, it's enrobed in confetti. It's not my birthday.

Meat and Potatoes

She spun the handcuffs with a pointer finger. The jewelry was covered in black fur and did not appear regulation. My life flashed before my eyes. She didn't say anything. I started to count the revolutions; her finger was a star and the spinning fluff the orbit of some moon. When I didn't say anything, she put a leg up on the table and leaned forward. The oxygen was sucked out of the room. A trio of candles extinguished themselves. Dinner was cold and getting colder.

A Wedding

A mouthful of water does not a bucket make. This thought at the monsoon. The groom paid handsomely for catering from his favorite hot dog vendor. It's a paper moon or a paper heart, I can't remember which. A child's head appeared from under a party supply tablecloth. The whole ordeal like being stuck on a desert island listening to Penderecki. It just made me miss the boat more.

Two Figures in a Vast Expanse

I'm traveling by horse and buggy across the country. There's a lot of time to think, a lot of time where nothing is happening. Thoughts of Maecenas. It'd be nice to sleep in until X every morning. Full disclosure: I haven't stopped at every red light. If I'm being honest, my horse, Claude, does most of the work. Nothing seems to bother him. We clop forward. Another confession: he shits on the road and I don't stop to clean it up—I know, I know. I've learned that horses are freer than people, although all they want to talk about is country music.

Poem

Noah takes a photo of himself every day for seven years. Then he does it again, except this time it's for 20. "Everyone needs a hobby," I say. We're at a rest stop when you show me the videos. I'm moving to co-pilot and you're taking the wheel. The deer pile up on the stretch of highway around Wis Dells. At night the headlights from our rental blur in drying orbs. At night we can stomach it.

Nate Dies at the End

Tom put a tarp over the gravy boat to keep the rain out. Monica did it in the laboratory with the pruning shears. Both of them were hoping for the best. Nate believes in the collective unconscious of dogs and has video evidence to prove it. Before he could explain, Tom put a tarp over the gravy boat to keep the rain out. When Tom came back inside, Nate was clutching Millie's paw. "Look into these eyes," Nate said. "Monica's car's gone," Tom said. Both of them were hoping for the best. "I'm being serious," Nate said. "Exactly," Tom said. Days pass. A child genius penned an opera. Again, Tom put a tarp over the gravy boat to keep the rain out. Monica returned with a tan and new love for beach volleyball. Tom committed to a philosophy of half-assing belief in the divine. Both of them were hoping for the best. Years later, Nate got lost on a mountain excursion. His body was never found. "Tom? The weather." He snapped out of it. Tom put a tarp over Monica's gravy boat to keep the rain out. Both of them were hoping for the best.

Laura Described Poetry

A poem always starts with wind knocking over beach umbrellas or playing tricks on our brains. That was all she swore on a grave. I did not know what Laura meant at least half the time. The other half, my mind drifted to sports injuries. A baseball pops a kneecap like a zit. An innocuous curling broom won't splinter, but the rubber isn't blood-free. Some connection between Laura's philosophy and the body's sacrifice, but it's cloudy like this beer that tastes like rotten apricot. I suffer tennis elbow just thinking about it.

Some Horses

Our vacation ended in Amish country, no closer to an immaculate barn. I was a shadowy man on a shadowy planet. You, minutes from hurling earbuds out the window, simmered with an ancestral rage. We cut our losses at the coffeehouse. The folk singer's smile was nonchalant and severe while he murdered the classics. "We are drifters, I tried to tell you, handsome," you said, your fingers galloping away with some horses.

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“Animal” is after the Jenny Morgan painting of the same name.

“Mason & Dixon”: “I’m not afraid of you and will beat your ass” is a slight variation on the title of the eleventh full-length album by Yo La Tengo.

“Some Horses”: “We are drifters, I tried to tell you, handsome” is from the poem “I Love Lenora” by Leslie Lewis.

“Sometimes a Pony Gets Depressed Again”: The phrase “chickens in the farmer's corvette” is from the song “Sometimes a Pony Gets Depressed” by Silver Jews.

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“Laura Described Poetry” is for Laura Theobald who absolutely knows what she’s talking about.

“Metal Detecting in the Sideburn State” is for Daniel Bailey.

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Nate Logan is the author of *Inside the Golden Days of Missing You* (Magic Helicopter Press, 2019). He lives in Wisconsin.

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(2024)
Nate Logan's *Wrong Horse* (2024)

The books/e-books can be found at www.moriapoetry.com.

Praise for *Wrong Horse*

Amid echoes of Joy Williams and David Berman's *Silver Jews*, Nate Logan populates his second book with a cast of off-kilter characters—a hamburger historian, a fanny pack-wearing contessa, a malapert surveyor—who speak in snippets of dialogue worthy of a Coen Brothers script. 'I, too, would like to mourn America's uncle,' someone says. Logan's vignettes root themselves in the easygoing uncanny of transitional spaces—steakhouse parking lots, anonymous diners and cafes, or alongside a little puddle named Lake Cathleen. *Wrong Horse* bets it all on the odd and comes in true. – Shanna Compton, author of *(CREATURE SOUNDS FADE)*

Wrong Horse calls the universe's biggest bluff: what if this is all there is? The tiniest miracles, muted glories, a longing for escape so intense that it creates a new way out? Nate Logan's poems speak from the other side of a vast span of time and experience. These poems have seen things. They sneak up on you. They pull on mundane moments until the daily becomes dramatic, then absurd, then holy in its strangeness. They sting with a merciless knowing—yes, we did bet on the wrong horse and now we're riding it forever—then soothe with the balm of shared humanity, because we are riding this horse together 'on a day like any other, probably a Wednesday,' until we reach the end. And we will stop for wonder. And probably also waffles. – Lauren Ireland, author of *So Below*

In a Nate Logan poem, one thing follows another and that's the plot. The poem is a parking lot of things both parked and moving: 'The wind nudges the car with a socked foot.' Logan's speaker says that what he doesn't know, he can't tell us; he leaves those things as they are. But there is much that Logan knows. There are plenty of horses and ponies. One of them is wrong. One of them gets depressed again. With Logan 'We talk like this for some time, getting nowhere,' but nowhere is a place too. With Logan we might be 'betting on the wrong horse,' but we are seriously betting. [...] If, as Dickinson says, poetry 'dwells in possibility, a fairer house than prose,' the exception is a good prose poem. If poetry doesn't make for new possibilities, why bother? And Logan 'would never get in the way of someone else's happiness.' He 'would not even stick my [his] foot in the door of someone else's happiness.' The puddle is Lake Cathleen. Many unexpected things will make us think of Nate Logan from now on. – Leslie Lewis, author of *Rainy Days on the Farm*

