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The Barkeaters

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THE BARKEATERS

The blush on the slope of the valley passes under the ragged advance of a cold front bearing down from the high peaks. Oh, the weather..., says the lover, then sighs, then withdraws to her side of the car.

Yes, the weather: a low pressure system, sluggish and unsure, blundering north from the moist Carolinas and a high pressure system of stiff New England air. They meet in this place of broken barns and cold streams full of gray stones where the clouds are tatters and the sun a distant, shrouded eye. Morning passes into reconnaissance, the taking of temperatures, soundings from the sky, the reluctance of yellow leaves to abandon their limbs. Yes, it is these things that have made us sad: colliding systems and the uncertainty of their meeting in the granite slabbed valleys of the Adirondacks.

The lover does not respond. Her hands are propped, lids drawn. Her slight breathing covers our retreat and dims the view of another day's unleaving. But I am pleased to have explained it all in passing on a road that winds among rocks and descends through ghostly stands of birch.