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## Off the Grid

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# Off the Grid

Dawn Hackett

Being a recovering alcoholic, I love a good bar.

Sitting in Staunton's Texas Steakhouse, parking lot recently plowed and slushed, there's a sort of freedom in the peanut ridden isolation of their saloon. The area is small, definitely not the Jefferson. I place myself on the map in my head, the white area between UVA and national forest and tap the foot rest for navigational grounding. It's a long strange trip from Ponce de Leon to snow brushed mountains near the western Virginia border, but the smell of sizzling cow diverts and represses. Duane Allman is stealing the show from Clapton, bleeding and whining above Layla's piano break. Scorcese flashes onto the map and my mind returns to its normal mode, endlessly repeating a broken search code.

**72**

I'm in town for a test.

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, room 38, has two spindly beds, no phone, no alarm clock, but the TV gets 72 channels. A fried Physical Therapy student promised to bang on my door at 7:00 am so I can begin 12 hours of a nifty set of tests called Neuro-Psych eval. I have no idea why I am here. Rehabilitative Services sent me – more appropriately, is sponsoring me because I am dick-in-the-dirt broke. They even gave me a WaWa gas card. But I'm here now, having driven past many crooked, moribund SUV's banked in the ice in a borrowed '98 Dodge Stratus blinking airbag and battery lights every two hours. I give it 5,000 miles before disability forces early retirement.

David Bowie is shouting rebel, rebel, your face is a mess.  
I just ate gluten for the first time in over a month. Bowie confesses hot tramp, I love you so. My left foot is MIA again. There's 27.5 seconds left, Celtics hosting the Lakers on the middle TV above the bar, Celtics up by one with possession, turnover to Kobe – pulls a McHale, a long fade flatter than the back of my guitar but the ball gets net and the Lakers go up by one. Celtics doink. Game over. Same shit, different decade. I wonder which records Lin Bias would hold right now, his face immortalized in bronze under Auerbach's administration. I begin to long for what I cannot have.

I try to figure on why I can remember Lin but not the particulars of the meal I just finished. I feel the length of tomorrow along my spine and pay my bill.

Grace Slick is asking if I want somebody to love. The corner TV is turned to ESPN and I march out on the quick step thinking of all the NFL playoff games I've missed.

If I hurry, I can stop the world and slide into my creaky bed while meds take me under. I hope the game tonight has a Manning in it. Tomorrow I'll discern hieroglyphics and cry in front of a complete stranger over shit that can't be changed. For now, I'll muster the courage to change the channel and argue with the refs to no one whose there, knowing I've forgotten the wisdom to tell the difference between a bad call, and a good play.