

## THOMAS

## ESCAPE

The sun here, in the dream, is harsh; the sky glares like tin. Escape; he must escape. On the other side of this dune there's a way out; the map said so. He tries to climb but the sand is unstable; he sinks in up to his knees, and the loose face of the dune slides away from the summit, carrying him with it. Down, down. Maybe there's another way out? He needs to look at the map. But there is no map any more. Instead his hands are full of playing cards. He can't hold on; they spill into the wind. He has fewer and fewer to choose from. The right one may already be gone.

He wakes up. His mouth is sour with the taste of panic. He gets the microphone ready but he does not speak. After a long time he realizes that he's holding his breath.

He abandons the dream, gets up, splashes water on his face, fills the brass can so he can do the plants. He feels disrupted, as though he just lived through a week and then had all of his memories of it erased.

It's his day off and he has nothing to do. Janine's out of town, visiting her folks in Florida. He had plans to get together today with Jakob, go do one last soundwalk before the weather got too cold, but Jakob's starting a temp assignment this week and had to cancel. It's just as well: today, the soundmap project seems utterly pointless. As does most of the other stuff Thomas usually likes to do. He passes his computer and thinks of all the hours he's put in staring at that screen, wonders what else he could have done with that time. He can't really think of anything. *Hang gliding*, he finally suggests.

The coffee table in the living room is covered in legal tablets and CD cases: documents. Sometimes he feels so sick of documents, of all human endeavor. All this horrible clamor: what is it all *for*? He waters his fern and admires its relative lack of agenda. He sometimes imagines that he can perceive a pulse within plants, slow, serene. He would like to find a way to

synchronize to that beat. Even better, he would like to *be* a plant, to have no consciousness beyond a calm green center. He would like to die and be buried and rise up through the earth as grass.

There's a new bottle of Jameson's in the kitchen.

No. No. What he wants today is to be outside of himself, outside of the collection of habits that comprise him, and the drinking is as much a habit as anything else. He wants to do something different, something *unlike* what he would normally do. Once again he thinks of hang gliding.

Perhaps he'll go down to the park, let the sun bleach this rotten mood out of him. He's noticed that Chicago's leaves have begun to change. It would be nice to be somewhere among trees, to stand beneath a tattered canopy and breathe in the splendor of a dying season.

And if he goes to the park he'll be in the neighborhood of the record store. Maybe he'll drop by and see if anything new came in.