The War Criminal Rises and Speaks

Okkervil River

The heart wants to feel. The heart wants to hold. The heart takes past Subway, past Stop and Shop, past Beal's, and calls it "coming home." The heart wants a trail away from "alone," so the heart turns a sale into a well-worn milestone towards hard-won soft furniture, fought-for fast food, defended end table that holds paperbacks and back U.S. News. The mind turns an itch into a bruise, and the hands start to twitch when they're feeling ill-used. And you're almost back now, you can see by the signs; from the bank you tell the temperature and then the time, and the billboard reads some headlines. The head wants to turn, to avert both its eyes, but the mind wants to learn of some truth that might be inside reported crimes. So they found a lieutenant who killed a village of kids. After finishing off the wives, he wiped off his knife and that's what he did. And they're not claiming that there's any excusing it; that was thirty years back, and they just get paid for the facts the way they got them in. Now he's rising and not denying. His hands are shaking, but he's not crying. And he's saying "How did I climb out of a life so boring into that moment? Please stop ignoring the heart inside, oh you readers at home! While you gasp at my bloody crimes, please take the time to make your heart my home: where I'm forgiven by time, where I'm cushioned by hope, where I'm numbed by long drives, where I'm talked off or doped. Does the heart wants to atone? Oh, I believe that it's so, because if I could climb back through time, I'd restore their lives and then give back my own: tens of times now its size on a far distant road in a far distant time where every night I'm still crying, entirely alone." But the news today always fades away as you drive by, until at dinnertime when you look into her eyes, lit by evening sun - that, as usual, comes from above that straight, unbroken line, the horizon - its rising is a given, just like your living. Your heart's warm and kind. Your mind is your own. Our blood-spattered criminal is inscrutable; don't worry, he won't rise up behind your eyes and take wild control. He's not of this time, he fell out of a

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