

Model City [46]

It was like reading in the newspaper one morning that the city's building minister has placed a moratorium on the construction of new hotels, and feeling yourself flooded with relief.

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It was like only at that moment realizing how the proliferation of new hotels has filled your own head with vacancies, how each new hotel has added 50, 100, 200 emptinesses to a proliferation of emptinesses.

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It was like suddenly thinking about the emptinesses in yourself: your body with its cells, your heart with its chambers. There were already too many emptinesses.

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It was like feeling your cells and chambers flooded with relief, though you sense that the moratorium may have come too late, that the city with all its hotels may have already slid irrevocably into vacancy.

Model City [71]

It was like lying down in a new hotel room and trying to imagine a city in which no more building is possible, a city that is already perfectly, completely, sparkingly, imperviously built.

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It was like imagining living in that city, in which the citizens are content with the already built, in which architects do not exist, and the very word 'architect' has an old-fashioned ring to it, like 'apparatchik' or 'castellan.'

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It was like imagining living in that city as an architect, and being unable to move to another city for sheer fascination, spending all day looking out at the perfectly built city, its perfect skyscrapers and airports and churches.

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It was like being the architect and knowing that all cities everywhere are all already built, as he sits at his window all day, fascinated, looking out at all of it all already perfectly built.

Model City [49]

It was like taking the train across a border between two countries with disparate languages, one built like a fortress and one slinky as a river, and thinking about how orderly languages are, keeping within their borders.

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It was like anticipating how the station-names will change abruptly from words stout as fortresses to words slinky as rivers right after the border, as if each language lived in a world untroubled by the existence of the other.

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It was like crossing the border and trying to feel it underneath the train, to feel this instance of division, of order, of force, of fate. But the border was an abstraction ordering other abstractions, like stout and slinky languages.

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It was like noticing the train has stopped at the border and seeing a woman outside with the wrong passport apprehended by police — and remembering the luxury of forgetting the brute ordering force of abstractions.