

Automobile
by Eric Cecil

Finally, I'm getting a new car. It's been years since I've owned one. Unfortunately, this model can accommodate only one person: the driver. That's fine, I decide. This will be a solo journey.

As I retrieve the car from its appointed location, a curbside spot in an industrial part of town, I realize that I don't have keys. Just as quickly, I'm suddenly behind the wheel. And I'm driving.

On a highway. It's empty: nothing but a nude stretch of blacktop, totally free of traffic, devoid of any markings, signs, guardrails, roadside attractions. Intermittent lamps pool weak light on its surface. I pass these at a moderate speed, attempting to look beyond them. I can see nothing but the road. I don't know where I'm going, but it doesn't seem to matter. All that matters is that I'm driving.

The radio is playing. It's somehow broadcasting visually, relaying diaphanous images to which I have limited access. One of these is of a somber quintet in matching suits. In the space of a modest ballroom, they provide strange funereal arrangements for a seated crowd.

I decide to ask the quintet about my destination. Before they can respond, an unseen announcer signals a break in the music.

It doesn't matter where you're going, he says, affecting a jaunty arrogance. You're not going to get there.

Frustrated, I attempt to ease onto the shoulder, but there isn't one, and I can't stop.