

A Letter to California

Dear Kelly, today I washed socks
and was reminded of the ten
likely still at your house—not
yours—from sleepovers long past.

And then I thought about backpacks
and how, for friendship, they're enough
and about wolves in mediocre artwork:
yours improved but mine
did not.

And I thought about adventures
through the woods where
bears lurk—but probably not—
and deer chase dogs
and none of this could deter us.

I thought about driving
at night—always aimlessly—
and crying
because Everything is choking
at 2 am, the road an inky void
and the world in front of us,
horrifying in headlights.
Nothing has happened
and that's the point.

I'm certain that California is wonderful.
I'm still an hour beyond
the town where I was born and
the town where I was raised:
where friendship formed, remains.
I'll forgive you for leaving us
in the actual cold if you're content,

and I'll repress my recognition that still
nothing has happened
as well as my terror
that forever distance will prevail.

—*Patricia McCambridge*