

SECOND LETTER TO M.

Like what you said about my job as a bicycle messenger, Isn't that beautiful. You said, Isn't that beautiful, how I might walk into a room and deliver the words that could change someone's life! Well. More often it feels like what I'm delivering is cellular phones left behind at cross town staff meetings or Congressional press releases that go to magazines with names like *Defense Complex Monitor* or *Radiation Week*. Almost daily I take passports from Coca-Cola for authentication at the embassies of developing nations up and down Massachusetts Avenue. But I like it sometimes. Leaning over to unlock my bicycle from a street sign or a parking meter at the end of the day, the anger that grew within me all afternoon can simply disappear—and it feels good to be there with that slight city breeze brushing across my face as the traffic rushes up 15th Street behind me. I've got the key in my hand, the U-lock in my pocket, my bike between my legs: and I watch the shelves and honeycombs of light begin to shine from the very same buildings that rose so stupidly over the lunch hour. Sometimes I can believe that they might shine for me alone.

And then I'm riding home, maneuvering down streets that slide like tunnels through the skyline's dirty glaciers. I'm doing errands. And of course it is in one of those enormous drug stores in which you get lost in the aisles without remembering what you came in looking for, and in which I could never imagine anyone coming to fill a prescription, there being just too much of everything no one needs here. But the advertisements in the large windows were offering me back my life, recommending Sale Items! and there was one thing I needed. So I wander the bright aisles, the floors seemingly the source of this overall fluorescence illuminating the walls and ceilings, walking around like an astronaut in space, until I eventually find the pomade and the condoms and the fruit-punch flavored Gatorade I came in for. But those little red vests the check out clerks have to wear make me so sad. One clerk waves my items across the glass part of the counter a few times until we hear the beep of each price registering, and then she places them in a white plastic sack. I hate it. But it's too late to say, Look, that's alright, I have my own bag, so I take the little sack from her hand and walk outside.