I’ve been the reason for broken laws, broken curfews, broken plans. I’ve been everything to one person as she drives through the suburbs like a proud, careful queen reigning over her kingdom. I’ve given perfect directions and been happily ignored, been taken the long way round just for the hell of it. I’ve seen every inch of her winding suburban kingdom, witnessed sunsets approaching storms, pink-gold smiles and green-gray bruises in the sky. Am I princess or mere courtesan?

Once, we drove down the street, through the snow, toward her house, cheating a curfew clock with nervous stomachs.

Now we stroll through the snow and stop only to press our lips together for a moment, knowing that we couldn’t possibly lie down in the snow of my neighbor’s front yard, however much we may want to. Now there’s so much light even at 1 am, every street lamp, every lamp post, every leftover Christmas light finding multiplicity in the whiteness of the ground and trees and sidewalks and road and clouds and roofs. Now the light urges us along, she toward her house, where she will find a cold bed and clean pajamas; me toward her house where I will immediately turn back and walk the other way.

The way home for me will be colder, the light less illusory, less encouraging, now consuming and demanding. I will squint my eyes against it while the wind throws ice at me. The wind, I will think, loves only one way. It caresses your back and the palms of your hands, then slaps winter across your face and laces its fingers through your ribs.