Alex Bates

*The Montana Drive*

It’s early in the summer morning, the time for vacation is over. The morning dew clings to the grass on the lawn. A worn asphalt trail stretches from the Home across the vast lawn like a stream connecting to a larger river. Two cars sit ready for their voyage: a sturdy blue SUV, and the RX-7. My bags are packed, and my alarm is going off, and all I can think about is how much I want to stay. My aunt and I say our goodbyes to the family we were visiting as we set off for our 12-hour drive. As I approach the RX-7 I can’t help but be a little nervous, I came to Montana without a car and now I’m about to drive home in my first. The RX-7 isn’t just any old first car though, the RX-7 is a Japanese sports car from 1985. The RX-7 is a 2-door tiny black coup with a faded red carpeted interior, a tinted glass window cuts through the carpeted roof letting in light from above. As I turn the key in the ignition you can hear the engine turn over as it begins to start. The sound of the roaring engine is beautiful, this is the first time I start a car that is my very own.

Driving is really fun, especially on long windy roads. Cruise control is a life saver. As I cruise along the winding mountain roads nothing happens. Nothing happens for hours and hours, yet so much happens. Little things happen constantly and yet it feels like nothing. The road curves, I follow. I hit a bump and readjust the wheel. Thoughts wander to distant places, my attention fades, I snap back. Everything becomes a blur of constitution sapping micro moments. The inside of my car is an oven, with a glass roof to let sunlight and heat in, carpeted insides to trap heat on the inside, a black paintjob to absorb heat from the outside, and no air conditioning unit in it. Despite this heat I drove on, for that was all I could do. Luckily for me things were about to cool off. A few rain clouds decide to bless part of our expedition home.

Slowly at first it started to sprinkle, and then a drizzle, and then a pour. This felt like an oasis in the desert, I was saved. Little did I know I was about to get too much of a good thing. The rain clouds didn’t stop accumulating until they were an entire rainstorm. The rain coated the road like a slick layer of water on a road when it’s raining really hard. The cars in the lead kicked up buckets of mist into my windshield. Water sprayed everywhere, as our cars zipped along the mountain roads trying to balance speed and safety to get home. As we rose over an incline in the road, we reached the edge of the storm and were hit with a gorgeous view. The rolling green hills, mountains, and dispersing rain clouds combined into a beautiful landscape.

It’s just about sunset and only two hours of the quest home remain. As we enter Salt Lake County my caravan Buddy exits the freeway, this final stretch I must make alone. The sun has set, and I push onward lit only by the intermittent streetlights dotted along the freeway. As I’m going along, I suddenly find myself in a construction zone, orange traffic cones are placed dotted along the shoulders of the highway. Slowly the space begins to shrink, the traffic cones close lane by lane until traffic is routed into the median. The road quality in the median is much lower than the road quality on the road, it turns out this phenomenon is caused by the median not being a road. Not very long into the median I start hearing and feeling “BAM BAM”, “BAM BAM”, “BAM BAM”. My entire car shakes and lurches every time it hits one of these pits. Every time I go over one of the pits “BAM BAM” part of me dies inside “BAM BAM” will this damage my car? “BAM BAM” Something cold just fell and bounced off my leg. “BAM BAM” I take a glance at the ignition. “BAM BAM” It was the key. At this moment my soul left my body, but the car kept going. “BAM BAM” It came back into my body to continue driving the car, and continue driving I did, there was nothing else I could do. After a few minutes the construction passed, and they put us back on the actual road.

Having passed the scariest part of the trip, the rest of the drive had an uneventful calmness to it. The little things that make driving tiring seem to fade away. As I coast around my neighborhood the only thing I can think of is my bed, the sweet release of sleep. I round the corner and I can see it, so close... It’s a struggle as I pull the steering wheel clockwise while I roll into the driveway. Once I’m in position I pull the parking brake and quickly scrounge around the floor to find the key. Finally with the key recovered I shut off the car and it comes to a well-deserved rest. Then, while sitting and taking a minute to decompress, a white ball of fluff appears on the hood of the car! It’s Cookie our cat! He slowly takes a few steps up the windshield stretches himself big and long. Out of the edge of my sight my cat Bean appears! Bean sits right on top of the car, and I can see him through the glass moon roof. After appreciating seeing the cats I open the door to get out, and Cookie hops into the car instead! Bean quickly follows suit and I spend a moment in heaven playing with our cats. Finally, I get out of the car, make my way inside, and collapse into bed thinking to myself “Sometimes you can’t do anything but keep moving forward”.

**Bonus: My car, The *1985 RX-7 GSL-SE*:**





