F. J. Bergmann - Pilgrimage

*You must imagine yourself*

*as a place you will visit*

—Andrea Cohen, “Details You Must Remember”

In the west of somewhere, a country lane swerving down a long hill that tilts into the sea. Bracken glows like intricately chased bronze armor fitted to the contours of a fallen giant. A stag disappears into the russet landscape as the sun continues its long decline. At a charming villa we stop for tea, and realize that a mistake has been made when they serve us spiderkisses—vodka, opium, and India ink. We are stirred. Fortunately, the ribbons won’t stay tied. After we manage to escape, the sky is purple, cross-hatched with a fur tattoo of clouds impeding the wheelchair progress of the moon. The road runs next to a bullet-pocked wall bearing an uncanny resemblance to a negative image of the constellation Draco, omitting dimmer-than-fifth-magnitude stars. On the other side of the wall, muted tumult, and the aroma of burnt flesh. We scream as the wind showers us with red leaves. We speak of returning every year until we are too old to be made new again, and then turn our weapons on each other.

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