

Wall  
by Eric Cecil

We're on the highway. I recognize neither the driver nor the passenger. From the backseat, I watch a herd of white goats break free from an overturned truck. The goats are tiny: Kids, I explain to the others. That's what they call them.

There's no response. The kids turn to sheep, then rills of ivory wool, then round, legless forms bounding along the blurred road like so many cotton tumbleweeds. Other cars and trucks swerve to miss them. Many fail. Inanimate white plumes, now hued by brown and red, soon litter the length of the highway. Cockeyed vehicles idle beside them.

We brake to miss one, skidding into a hairpin turn at the blackened form of an outbuilding: An old service station, I guess aloud, a defunct diner, an arid watering hole. There's no telling. There's no reason why we're now speeding toward a wide, imposing wall.

Not a wall, the driver calls. It's the road.

No ordinary road. This stretch of highway is a vertical passage that extends forever skyward. As we ascend, a pale valley sprawls below, its sharper features threatening to skewer us.