

Home for the Holidays

We've got that eight-hour drive
tomorrow, over the pass
and across the high plateau
to the next ridge, where
we follow the tunnels into
Galicia and see beyond the fog
the forests of fired pine standing
naked and desolate when they
should have been lush and green.
Soon the valleys sprinkled with towns
and villages will open and close
all the way to the cold and capricious lip
of the North Atlantic, upon which legends of men
as merciless and hardened to the gales
as the waves are depend.

Vigo is an industrial port, and the QM2
stopped here on her trial run, testing
her parking skills in the wide deep harbor
before daring to cross the pond. Bigger in 2004
than any other passenger ship ever built you could
see her moving sedately through the sloping
streets, massive among the other edifice.
A pair of German subs sank starboard somewhere
along her route back to England without so much
as a single rose tossed to the souls of the sixty-five
Nazi dead. Franco sat firmly on his backside then
and as far as he was concerned it was just bad luck.
A year before the assault craft emptied
their bowels on the beaches of Normandy
no one dared imagine how far the blood
could flow. Now Vigo's master is Citroen
and there's no cash, another unforeseen calamity,
so the factories will shut down production
and the men will be home for the holidays,
sitting on their sofas and wishing they were sailors.

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