Let's Say You Are This Page

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As to say: “We take such pains,” and “The Sistine is equally blank.”

An F-train oils the platform’s subway atmosphere, shooting carloads of jobs across my face by express. Through their blur I stare into somewhere else, the way, at a certain speed passing cracks in a backyard fence, cedar slabs become a transparence. Then out again, into the dusk air, glimpsing through light rain in the Village an Indian, hurrying, sheltering his guitar.

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Listen, only the real is intolerable. Last evening I sat holding a book of poems in this fixed stampede of talus at the beyond of a mountain so remote we’ll have to imagine. Ragged boulder field, saying all the buffalo have come here to die. From a surround of peaks, June snow works invisibly loose beneath the surface in low, irregular halts, gargles, sobs leaking away like an underground sunset. The west reddens, sinks past the edge of invention, where it warms each hide. No, that’s imagined. But not these hidden wrist-thick streams I could follow till they flash like snowfields against another man’s seamless sky. Let’s say you are this page by Gunnar Ekelöf, looking up into eyes going dark beside a blue tent. Let’s say you’re now seeing alpenglow on a face dimming, becoming part of a vast magnificent loneliness so real that being here doesn’t matter. Is there a single bird? Surely there must be, somewhere.