Litany

Stephen Dobyns
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Wherever we go, we must go in darkness. We have eaten our candles. Cattle must always be accepted. They are useless and as benign as Christmas. Rats are hated not for their faults, which are ours, but because they are consistent in our virtues. In the cellars of misers each rat is a hero. I shall be such a hero with a black wagon and bell, walking the streets and accepting the living. We read of directions in books. I know of roads that shut down at night, go off on their own explorations. They are modest and no super highways are among them. Bite into an apple and a small voice shouts hello. Be respectful to your food. Run down the street shouting and everyone shuts their doors. Join them in darkness. On the roads we have taken, cities are the last stages of the cattle’s journey. Chicago welcomes their conventions. The right roads will discover my humility, tell me their secrets. Eventually, when people reach Chicago after years of darkness, cattle will drive wagons with streamers and favors. Avoiding the occasion, I will go north with a road in Wyoming. It will tell early stories. Each step will brighten toward the sun.