Riding with Gary

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College of Dupage

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With Gary it was always a wild ride.

Life flying by in crazy hysterical star-spinning delight
of joy-riding teens on a hot summer night.
Arms reaching, frenzied shouts,
then barreling down and
bottoming out.

Dirty work gone in the rear-view mirror,
drywall dust pasted on sweat-damp skin,
All pain puffed away in cigarette smoke,
Care washed away by whiskey’s icy burn,
and whites and wine.

All night we breathed the melodied air
and strummed and sang and swelled
with twisted harmonies,
laughed with drunken madness
and ecstatic music-making,
raucous revelry –
a horrible din
impossibly bad
guitars and voices hopelessly out of tune.

Speeding country lanes alive with clattering gravel through woods a blur.
Blasting radio road tunes as we
danced with danger
careened
around
corners
cool wind in our streaming hair.

City lights sparkling, we
cruised the neighborhood low and slow
with catcalls and commentary,
keen observation
and Gary’s wry analysis of

Whatever You Got.

Paupers or princes –
he’d been both in his time after all –
he could – and would – talk to anybody
about anything
(But maybe not specifics, you know)
‘cause conspiracies abound and the fix is in
And who could deny it after checking his record.
We were all part of the plot at one time.
Like the cops who rousted him and curbed that beater,
the Blue Demon with its hand-painted hood, dented fenders, smudgy windows
and carpet rolled up on the roof like a corpse.

Connoisseur of crazy,
He knew it when he saw it
called it when he caught it
But somebody always found him a space in the parking lot
And a couch
at least for a night or a month or more
‘cause he was
Irresistible Irrepressible Irreplaceable.

You could hitch a ride for a while with him
then hop off
or drop off
And somebody else would scramble inside
for the next leg
cruising along in the lunatic whirl
as long as they could handle
the heat the hilarity the hell-bent dash,
And try to remember
That Gary’s maniacal ride could only ever end
in a fiery crash.