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THE JESUS ROAD

by Brian Doyle

One time I was deep in the Navajo Reservation in the deep
Vast desert in Arizona and I got to chatting with a shy man
In a pub. He was nursing an ale and I was nursing a whisky.
He ran sheep, he said, and what is it that you do for money?
I told him I was essentially a storycatcher. A journalist, you
Might say. You take stories from people for cash? he asked.
Well: yes. They don't mind? he asked. Generally not, I said.
In fact often they are grateful to have someone tell some of
Their stories. For everyone has a thousand and only lets out
A few. This is true, he said, this is true, and he told me tales
Of growing up nearby, near the San Juan River, the gracious
River, he called it, as it never ran dry, and his was a parched
Country, to be sure. We got to talking about souls and spirits
In everything, there we pretty much saw eye to eye, although
He was startled to hear that I walked what he called the Jesus
Road; most of the folks on Jesus Road, they think they know
Where spirits are and are not, he said, but what do we know?
One great thing about being Dineh is that we know what we
Don't know, which is mostly everything. So you treat a spirit
With respect even though you cannot see or understand what
It is doing. Animals, trees, rivers. Anything alive is a spirited
Being, that's clear enough to see, but the mountains and cars,
Well, who can be sure? Better to be respectful. How pleasant
To find a Jesus Road man of the same mind about reverences.
I would stand you a second drink but I must be off to my job;

Inscap

The sheep have no patience if I am late. They are taskmasters,
Those sheep! I leave you then as a new brother in the praying
That we do by being respectful to spirit wherever it is located.