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Dark Sacred Night

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I. A handful of flung stones, the way years ago we stood on a beach north of Bellingham and pitched them in, to light up the noctiluca. So the dippers hang over Yellow Springs, lit up, empty, but poised to collect the night's dark dregs. And exiled to smoke, outside, I mull night sounds and treeshapes, the boys reaching into the catalpa earlier in the day for the long pods to use as bait. If they'd asked, I would have gone along, I think, content to sit on the bank and watch--"They're the best bait ever!"
Catalpa, catfish, green slender pods pulled out of a tree and dangled, dipped into a muddy slow-moving stream.

II. Music in a stream, then the stage gone black after the song concludes, guitars handed around, traded for others. Spotlights then, two, and a twirling flair of color--green, red, yellow, blue--as the Indigo Girls belt out a tune for the century's end, the crowd bobbing along. Two high school girls, one blond, one dark, stood up and danced in their seats in front of us, until one grew braver and moved into the aisle to find more freedom. They were friends with identical haircuts, and high school returned to me with a rush, the strange longings flooding a body in motion, how it seemed, at times, that skin would burst. They danced on the threshold of their lives, and I thought I could see how they worried over what others thought. A sudden wish, then, washed over me with the notes, and I wanted them to find
boys to love who would cherish them, work equal to their dreams, a way to move beyond constraint of aisles, seats, and stares.

III. Highway song, the road smooth as milk under stars. Barefoot, walking the white line years ago, I found it less rough than the road, though wasn't it fraught with danger? Walking the middle, eyes closed, listening for oncoming cars. Driving now, and music driving me along, I sing with Louis Armstrong and we're beautiful together. At first, in the turn to I-96 north of Ann Arbor and on toward home, there's only dark in the rearview glass, no other cars, but then twin lights appear, and then more and more, a golden stream of lives exceeding the speed limit. When someone passes, I see another dark shape like mine bent over a wheel and glowing dashboard, and I keep close for a time, slipstreaming at 75, a little convoy of music blended with hope, heading west into the remaining light.