A Sketch

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Keith and I talked about going downtown. Usually, we would spend our Saturday afternoons drinking in the San Luis. Today, it was easier to stay in our room, since the weather was cold and the trip downtown meant standing and waiting for a bus. Our talk rambled. We damned the hopelessness of our boredom, and convinced ourselves to try the bus. A short wait, people to see, and a new conversation gave us a glimmer of optimism. But, when we arrived at the plaza, the sun had faded and shone only weakly through the overcast sky. Clouds of dust rolled over the mountains, and sand already blew from curbs and building corners. We took two or three turns around the plaza, considered the distance to the San Luis, and damned the weather. There was another bus. We could go home. We ran to the bus. Our ride, this time, was a clanking machine that counted tokens . . . it was backs of heads . . . it was bumps and jostle and stops. Our conversation bleached like the wind on the colorless sky. Keith pointed out an empty beer can that, like us, was being driven by the wind. Rolling in the center of the street, it shunned sloping driveways to keep abreast with our bus. It jogged on corners and edges of bricks, but held on to its remaining life, the wind. The bus stopped. Sand and leaves swirled . . . the can raced across the smooth intersection ahead of us. We wondered if we would see it again; how it had come to be in the street; and (since it surely must die) how it would die. We overtook the can as it rattled on rough bricks. An upturned corner struck it. It lurched and rolled to the side and stopped in a sand strewn gutter. And the wind continued blowing.