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Notes on a Single Line

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A short book

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Notes on a Single Line is a short book about a single line. It was made to be read in one sitting, then put back. The sentences stay with the scrap of board and the midmorning. They do not wander off into a story they cannot pay for.

The midmorning made the drawing table smaller. On the scrap of board, a single line held still, which is not the same as being finished. I could hear quiet and, under it, nothing that needed a name. The ruling pen waited. Most of the work was in the waiting.

What I left out was larger than what I put in. The drawing table had corners I did not describe, and a window I refused to make into a view. On the scrap of board, a single line stayed inside its own edges. That refusal is the subject, as much as the color is.

I numbered nothing. A date would come later, on a catalog card, but the midmorning inside the work is not a clock time. The ruling pen has no opinion about dates. The scrap of board only shows that the mark was made, and that it was allowed to remain.

I went back to the drawing table in the midmorning. The scrap of board was where I had left it. What I had come to see was a single line, and it had not agreed to be simple. I set the ruling pen down and did not pick it up again until I had looked long enough.

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There is a kind of attention that starts only after the midmorning. In the drawing table I kept the scrap of board clear so a single line would have somewhere to sit. Quiet came and went. I did not turn toward it. When I finally used the ruling pen, the mark was smaller than the decision to make it.

A record of a single line is not the thing itself. The scrap of board took the light and gave a duller light back. From the

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drawing table I could measure the band with a hand, then with the ruling pen, and the two measures did not match. I kept the second measure. The first one had too much of me in it.

Later the midmorning changed and the color cooled. I did not correct the scrap of board. Correction would have been a different book. The ruling pen left a trace at the edge, thin enough to miss if you were only passing. Quiet filled the pause, and the pause was part of the page.

Close the book and the drawing table does not travel with you. What travels is the sequence: the scrap of board, the ruling pen, the decision to stop. Quiet will be different wherever this file is opened. The rights in the file stay where they were.

If you license the file, you are not buying the drawing table. You are buying a described use of a single line, for a term, in a territory, in writing. The watermark on this preview is the reminder that the looking is not the license. The scrap of board goes on being itself after the agreement ends.

I read the page the next day in a different midmorning. The a single line had settled. It looked less like an event and more like a fact. Facts are easier to credit and harder to decorate. I prefer them.

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I looked again at the scrap of board. The a single line was still there, neither better nor worse. The ruling pen had done what it can do, which is very little, and enough. Outside, the midmorning continued without needing a sentence.

A margin is also a decision. I left one, then widened it, then stopped before the scrap of board became only frame. A single line stayed in the middle, where I could find it again.

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Someone will ask what the picture is of. It is of a single line, and of the time it took to leave it alone. The drawing table is not in the file. The attention is.

I copied one sentence into the catalog note and deleted it. The note only needs the title, the date, and the fact that the rights are reserved. The paragraph can live here.

The quiet changed pitch. I did not rewrite the page to match it. A book that chases the room never gets out of the room.

On the second reading the a single line looked plainer. Plain is not a defect. It is how a field survives being looked at twice.

I set the ruling pen parallel to the edge and did not draw. The alignment was the note. The scrap of board recorded nothing, which I then had to write down in words.

If the use is small, the license is still a written one. Scale is not a substitute for permission. The a single line does not become free because the file is a preview.

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