From Postcards from Where I Live

Be Thankful for What You Got

—William DeVaughn, Written and performed

Growling pit bulls and German shepherds
jump spiked gates and crunch Chihuahuas like taquitos
in my North Long Beach neighborhood.
I carry a metal rod, stay on guard while walking Chacho,
my cream and caramel Jack Chi. We avoid certain streets,
circle the same eight-block radius of flat concrete and asphalt.
Whenever we can, we hop in my '95 Toyota Tercel
for an escape just twenty minutes away.

We park at the bottom of Signal Hill, wind up Skyline Drive,
up the gated community's paved paths. I'm breathless;
Chacho's ready to run. We compromise and power walk
around Hilltop Park's rim and Panorama Drive,
pass the squeak of bobbing oil pumps.
Air swept clean by Santa Ana winds
reveals L.A. high rises and San Bernardino mountains.
The cobalt blue pyramid at CSULB rises from treetops.
Huntington Beach's jagged shore shimmers and froths.
Off the Long Beach coast, yachts and freight ships
cruise by artificial islands where palm trees
and happy colored towers camouflage oil pumps.
Behind the Queen Mary, gantry cranes stand erect,
like steel dinosaurs ready to do some heavy lifting.

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