

Beaching It

EVERY GUY I KNOW who's even the least bit footloose has the same fantasy as me — you buy a junker, point it someplace you never ever heard of, and drive it till it dies. Till it breaks down in the middle of the night with nobody around to help you, and you wake up the next morning with your engine all over the road. A couple miles away there's some dinky little town that's too small for your atlas, and even though the folks there can't help you with your car, they're nicer to you than anybody else you ever bumped into. You hang around for the vibe and soon enough you run into the perfect girl for you, the soul-mate you stopped believing was out there. Then all these squishy feelings come out. You start thinking about baby names, and you laugh at yourself for ever wanting to run away from the daddy you were supposed to turn into all along. You look around at all the great things you've got in this little nowhere town and decide that being yourself isn't so bad after all, decide to pitch your tent there and watch your hair go gray.

For a while I thought maybe Rockport, Massachusetts, was going to be that place for me. And even though I didn't break down there, I did get to town by accident. This guy Jacob, a glass-