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The Last Page: Times Change, People Change, Dreams Change

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I’ve recently begun to entertain notions of moving to Alaska, but when I say this people inevitably bring up the long, dark winters. Still, I wonder if they’ve ever been outside on a snowy night—especially when the moon is out. It’s not so much dark as a different kind of light. Alaska, all the way up on the map and off by itself, seems like it must be just a bigger version of Maine. They say people move to Alaska when they’re running away from something, and Alaska does have that mystical, faraway quality. “Things not working out at home? Have you considered moving to Alaska?”

Alaska is appealing right now because it represents promise and potential, a whiff of the way life could be. Alaska is appealing because I have no idea where I want to go or what I want to do there.

Except, that’s not really true. I do know what I want to do. I want to buy land, build a house with a hexagonal sauna, get married, and have lots of children. I want to buy a sheepdog to make sure they (children, not sheep) stay near the house. I’d like to keep in touch with friends and work at a stimulating job that lets me travel some and provides enough to keep the family solvent. The exact details of this job are still pretty hazy, and that’s bringing the whole plan down.

When I started as a freshman, I had a clear idea of what my future held. I would major in Asian studies, achieve perfect Chinese, and graduate to a job as a foreign correspondent stationed in Beijing. Maybe I would get re-stationed in 10 years to somewhere equally cool, and, after a long, fruitful career as a journalist, I would return to the United States a hard-bitten reporter, take a job teaching Asian studies or journalism, and get around to the whole house/kids/dog part of the plan. My wife would be someone I’d met abroad, somebody beautiful and exotic who rolled her R’s, a Moroccan Jew perhaps, or an Italian art dealer. It would be great.

At this point I guess that plan could still work out, but it’s looking increasingly unlikely. For one thing I’ve realized I don’t like news very much. It’s boring: “Town Officials Say… “ Or it’s sad: “Suicide Bomb in Baghdad… “ Either way it’s not very appealing. And as for the exotic women,