

Pain

It doesn't matter which way I apply it. Take one of my more banal approaches: I locked your left Achilles, refusing you those tight turns on the race track, when all you sought was speed. But so far, I haven't completely tied you up. Here and there, I let your tendon loose a little, unwind a bit, for those more leisurely paces, that take you out (slowly mind), on the soft shoulder of the trail, beside the river, early mornings, so you see, with the speed I allow, mist rising from the river, the swirl of currents, the view from the bridge; so that you raise your eyes, stop to watch the geese flying south, the white egret swallow the frog, count the seven deer motionless in the blanched grass—or notice your own incessant commentary. I only tighten, pull your tendon, give you pain, when you start to forget I can stop you anytime—because I want you always to remember your weaknesses, take account of them, do nothing, attempt nothing, without first consulting me.

—Theresa McCourt