

RACE ACROSS A MIND

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A N E X C E R P T

Chapter 18 · Day six · Kansas

*Day six of twelve. Three hundred miles of straight road,
with the body starting to give and the night still ahead.*

And it's here, when there's nothing left to give, that I do the only thing I know how to do: I break the impossible into pieces I know.

I learned this without noticing, over a lifetime. Any distance under a hundred kilometers, I know how to break it down into stretches of my childhood — and each stretch I choose opens like a door. The Kansas ahead of me, that straight line that never ends, stopped being Kansas. It became the Valeira road, the exact point halfway between Évora and Arraiolos: ten kilometers to each side, the knot that linked everything, the crossroads from which my boy's mind measured the world. And, once the stretch was chosen, came the rest — not the ideas, but the things: the smell of burnt stubble in the late afternoon, the color of the light on the islands of cork oaks, the heat rising off the tarmac, the exact feeling of the warm wind on my face. Memory didn't give me a film; it gave me my body back to a place.

And, in that place, he was always there.

Because the first time I did that road I was nine years old, it was my first real road ride, with cars passing. I wore a yellow jersey and some loose PDM shorts, too big for me. My mother worried, my father proud. And on the steep hill just before arriving in Arraiolos, my thighs burned like molten metal, I gasped desperately, I pulled the grown-up shorts that kept trying to fall down, and through the chain I forced the BMX to haul itself and a nine-year-old boy up that ramp.

Thirty-odd years later, in the middle of Kansas, at three in the morning, with the body in ruins, it was exactly the same thighs burning and the same boy hauling his bike. And my father was still behind, proud. This is the Race Across A Mind: while the body crosses America, the mind crosses a whole life — and brings back the one who can no longer be there. America is measured in kilometers. That other crossing, the one that brought my father back to me, isn't measurable. You just cross it.

It was this way, in pieces of childhood, that I reached the end of that night.



Nine years old, grown-up kit, legs on fire.

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Race Across A Mind is out on 24 September 2026.

The story of the first Portuguese rider to finish Race Across America solo — and of the other crossing, the one made inside.

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