

Document B

[The narrator recalls a period of time when he and his twin sister were teenagers.]

Our family came to a stop in Great Falls, Montana, in 1956, the way many military families came to where they came to following the war. We'd lived on air bases in Mississippi and California and Texas. Our mother had her degree and did substitute teaching in all those places. Our father hadn't been deployed to Korea, but
5 been assigned to desk jobs at home, in the supply and requisition forces. He'd been allowed to stay in because he'd won combat ribbons, but hadn't advanced beyond captain. And at a certain point—which happened when we were in Great Falls and he was thirty-seven—he decided the Air Force was no longer offering him much of a future and, having put in twenty years, he ought to take his pension and muster out.
10 [. . .]

Each time our family moved to a new place—any of the far-flung locales—and settled ourselves into a rented house, and our father put on his pressed blue uniform and drove off to work at some air base, and my mother commenced a new teaching position, Berner¹ and I would try to think that this was where we'd say we were from if
15 anyone asked. We practiced saying the words to each other on our way to whatever our new school was each time. "Hello. We're from Biloxi, Mississippi." "Hello. I'm from Oscoda. It's way up in Michigan." "Hello. I live in Victorville." I tried to learn the basic things the other boys knew and to talk the way they talked, pick up the slang expressions, walk around as though I felt confident being there and couldn't be
20 surprised. Berner did the same. Then we'd move away to some other place, and Berner and I would try to get situated all over again. This kind of growing up, I know, can leave you either cast out and adrift, or else it can encourage you to be malleable and dedicated to adjusting—the thing my mother disapproved of, since she didn't do it, and held out for herself some notion of a different future, more like the one she'd
25 imagined before she met our father. We—my sister and I—were small players in a drama she saw to be relentlessly unfolding.

Richard Ford, *Canada*, 2012

¹ Berner: the narrator's twin sister