

Planes

I crossed the mountain range separating
the West from the East, to the 'burbs
of Detroit and Chinatown and a cheap
motel where you were staying with some friends.
Ironically your choice of concert brought you
right to the place where my flight would bring me.
Funny that the last few days you spent
were spent with me. You were seeing music
that was dark, satanic stuff, the kind
that Mom would never let me listen to
if I were still a kid at home.
You asked me if I wanted sex and thought,
I guess, that that was why I came
across the mountains all the way to
Motor City where I could have sworn
the hospital was where I should have gone,
even though your friends were in the next bed.
You told me how to call a cab the next day
and I was certain there was something up
when it turned out to be a black cab, not
a yellow one like I was used to. Why
was there a number for police inside, and
what were those code names on the receipt?
Why did the monitor at the airport
start out in Chinese, when I was in Detroit?
Why did it seem that I was so alone
and disconnected from each person
on the flight, so that when I spoke
it hardly seemed my voice could pierce
the air and travel far enough to reach
the air beyond my oral cavity that abutted
the ears of men in black suits?
In Boston, cabs in yellow, cars in black,
and one in white I could surrender to
which I had tried to fight off for too long.

McLean

Months after I read the Bell Jar
by Sylvia Plath was when I first
confronted the idea that maybe depression
was not always in the form of a jar
but rather moths. Laying in a bed
next to a roommate who had wet hers
and who either had a soundtrack
imitating nature or was making
me crazy enough to imagine a
soundtrack of my own, I let my mind
wander back to a time when I had
really smelled stale urine and listened
to crickets in the woods in a cabin
with thirteen other teenage girls.
One of them would pack up all her
toiletries and carefully bring them
to the latrine, not letting any
one of them touch any other item
and not letting any of us touch
any of the items, either. She was
a social oddity, I was on the top bunk.
Sylvia watched the servers bring
avocados stuffed with crab and even though
I'm a vegan now I live in California
sometimes I look out for stuffed-crab
avocados too.

Spinning

Overdue for a good conversation
with a man, superior in stature,
age, title, and position,
hulking at least ten inches taller.

Visiting hours are for friends and family
and also for the ones who know you best.

"If you want to finish, you might think
about taking this pill." You might want to
listen to what I'm saying. You might want
to give up rationality,

to give more to your work. Maybe
you're not really cut out for this.

Maybe you need to be cut down a notch
and maybe you need to take this drug.

There was no surprise registering
when he walked into the hall, the wing
with green and red and blue labels on doors;
mine was purple. Worry, not for me.

This was when he met my mother.

"Do I give you cause for feeling stressed?"

Being seized in a grip that holds you still
while the world is spinning, spinning, and
you can't catch your breath, and even though
you are not moving, you are moving fast.

Nothing to do but pretend you move
at the same speed as the rest of the world.

Cliffhanger

Two sets of stairs to the top
you climb each week, it's on Wednesdays
in the late morning, so you are never late.
You can even sleep in a little bit before.
She's often later than you are, so you have
a bit of flexibility in your punctuality.
Mostly just rattling off small accomplishments --
another chunk of thesis written, or
one more guy you're seeing who you left
this week. No one special until Eduardo,
who you trust so much you can't even
imagine he would let you hurt him.
He takes some of the edge off of the last
few years and you know she knows, but she
lets you imagine you are doing the work yourself.
He would never need a shrink; he somehow
leaves his pains outside of his body,
where they can't harm him and most of all
they can't harm the people that he loves.
Thirty weeks of typing in the code,
climbing sets of stairs, sometimes
reading on your Kindle or making lists
in the Moleskine that feels as though
it often saves your life. The last time
you exit that building you feel as though
you're jumping off a cliff but now
there is always a safety net at the bottom.

Leaving

The day after the day we left
(the day before the day I made it
all the way to Kansas in my blue
Corolla) was the day I said
goodbye for the first time.
That day after the long summer
where we met for the second time
but really for the first and all
our friends got to know each other too
(the day you were so tired you stole
an extra sip of my coffee, you
were always stealing little sips
from the thermos I lugged around),
we said our goodbyes on a street
in Brooklyn, outside someone else's
apartment where we'd stayed up just
a little later than everyone else
to finish saying goodnight more sweetly
after we were unconvincingly joking
with the tenants the whole evening.
The day you quoted Tennyson
and you weren't being coy or crude
(the day I told you in a puzzle
I loved you, as if you weren't aware)
was five days before I landed on
the other coast across this piece of land
to finish something that I started
way before the day before today
or the day before that one
or a few days before that.