

Leavetaking

Stars of the midnight airfield
are made from warm red X's
that pass by like kisses at the end of a letter
or negations
that coalesce into constellations of negative space
built with atoms traditionally used to indicate danger
or, even worse, failure.

We drop.

Rising wayward
And another scene appears
Thirteenth sign on terrestrial sky
(although this one is not unlike the last)
that glows and grows until cosmos meet and windows close

And then open again

No

No

No

as I taxi down the runway.

Was yesterday the last night I would touch your back as you slept,
or hold your morning in a coffee pot?

Are my doubts so unstable?
Have I weighted the wheel?

To hold my own is a precarious enough business
laid brazenly on the tarmac
To hold another, almost pernicious
I writhe free, lurching toward escape
until the stewardess hands me a card I am to fill out
She points to a final line,
Asking for my name

I check off the boxes
and with resignation
or finally,
understanding
sign with a flourish

like a love letter
and look out at the night.

Estate

What more is there to do

after an afternoon
spent sifting through
Bibles that smell
like the back of the garage
where we finally found the linen paint
for the hall by the bedroom
that you once shared with her,

but fall onto the carpet
strumming a few aimless chords
and trigger the demolition?

Bailey Catches Bird

A hundred generations of breeding
lead us to this historic evening
in the life of a dog
where, in heroic form,
cold song sparrow
nesting in some bushes beneath the awning
weary from its birdly life,
is evicted from her bough,
snatched in mid-air
and carried to the porch
in a rabid rush of victory
by snarling jaws that we pry open
our faces contorted with laughter

and shovel a wet body
into the garbage can.

Tourist in a Temple

Long after the scabs covered your knees
or dresses and hose
I remember the blanket.

When the camera swung like a pendulum from your neck
despite the sign on the column, its interdictory lens
warning us that time was ours alone

Even the frames where the men in robes
muttering something about respect,
led us to the door

And tapped the great resonant bell of consciousness
as we sank into the tile with a mess of ancient rolling bodies
lobbed off at the head

This primal part, lover of Scripture, seems to digest
with no uncertain feelings
the heart of your calamity: how cold you must have been.

And for a moment
that we never found on the roll
I could not be embarrassed.