

FIVE POEMS

Flight Attendant

Crash, she thought.
If the plane crashed
she wouldn't have to
fly to Minneapolis,
layover, and work
four legs the next day
She put the Bloody Mary
carefully on 22b's tray table.
Bloody Marys were so
dangerous. She spilled
them all the time.

Freezing

Bells and sirens blared.
Nobody seemed to
notice the snow but me.

My lips were shivering,
blue, and my hands
felt like ice. I had to find my mom.

My fingers were beginning
to freeze. I could hardly feel them,
or my toes.

I thought I saw my mom's red hair
peeking over the top of a slot machine,
so I tried to run towards her.

The snow fought my feet and
cut my legs as I pushed through it.
"Mom!" I cried out.

Turning the corner,
I saw her sitting at a slot machine,
nearly frozen, frost covering her red lashes.

Her eyes were fixed open
on the row of cherries
lined up across the win line.

“Rub your fingers over the
handle for luck,” my mom mumbled
through chattering teeth.

“But, Mom, can’t you see we are freezing?”

CL

I saw him all crumbled up in the bed.
His voice sounded like someone
was stepping on his throat.
I wanted to touch his hand,
but his bent fingers,
with the dried blood underneath
his fingernails, scared me.

I moved one baby-step closer.
CL mumbled. His hand fell and crashed
into the steel bar on his bedside.
I hurried to catch it but I was too late.
Blood started dripping onto the sheet.

My mom called CL a poor soul when
we walked out of the room.
I didn't want to cry, but just
one tear managed to come out
and roll down my cheek.

In the car on the way home

I listened to the squeak of the
windshield wipers as they went
back and forth against the glass.
All the little teardrops cried for CL
before the wiper pushed them away.

Good Catch

I visited him every Saturday.
Better go back, he said when he looked, through
a large glass window, into a rec room.
Wheel chairs arranged around tables,
a spoon trying to get to a mouth,
a woman crying out to go to the restroom,
nobody helping her, somebody telling her
to be quiet already.

He sat on the edge of his bed.
His feet, two balloons, stretching the white wave adhesives
of his hospital socks. "It could go either way now," he said
as if his life were a game, the score tied,
he had done his best, coming out of comas,
catching the long passes.
Triumphant when he walked a full hallway
to sit in a metal chair scale. He nodded, proud,
when the nurse announced, *Gained a pound.*

The day he died, I pulled a chair close
and put my feet up on his bed.
"Are you hungry?" he asked me,
his eye struggling to stay open,
shining light blue from somewhere without pain.
"We can get you a tray. The soup is good. Really. Call the nurse."

He turned the volume up on the TV hanging on the wall.
"This is a great day," he said.
"Why?" I asked, looking around the dark room.
"Because you're here and the football game is on

A WORD

The paramedics lifted my dad
in the wooden chair
he sat on for breakfast,

his half eaten toast stayed
on a paper towel
on the kitchen table.

From his hospital bed
my dad wanted to say something
We guessed, like a TV game show,
"covers, sit-up, your back"

My dad raised his eyebrow
like he always did.
"You're dying?" my mother said
in a stern voice. Nobody said a word.

As I left the room,
my dad blew me a kiss
from behind his oxygen mask,
good-bye.