

LC Gutierrez

The Magic of Flight: During the Pandemic, in Coach, Transatlantic,
and Distracted by Other People's Entertainment Systems

High hair and screens multiplying the diverse and the virtual. I love your cup
holders when we get there. Red wrapper pawn-priced seating. Fastened.
A homunculus spotted in the clouds or in the woman's flubbery neck?

What about my choke-hold coffee? Lights on in the puppy-milk hanger.
Finger swipe memorial in a crow-black hoodie. Compliance (we're all masked now).
First scene: A grainy filmed restroom in Charm City, long silky brown legs.
Exit sign and it's nothing, just like writing. Next, corner station Asian convenience.

No one even looks outside. Sweet nipples and dyed roots. A hospital soap-like series.
The boy falls off the quad and smiles. To ride a bike on one wheel, harlequined.
The girl, back to the paper cup and the golf club, jauntily
on his shoulder. A flotation device of feigned surprise.

Is that a Hawaiian shirt? Pearly whites and a pitch for wine. Again, restroom.
And the boy kneels: a broad mouth and who's pointing the finger now?
Like a wasteland, the earth tones disorient. There's a deep penetration
and tap, tap, tap, all name brands and matching stripes.

Something glorious outstretched. She's not taking any shit!.
I can only guess a middle-aged hipster. David Carradine? Is he dead?
Swish through the vineyard in a dream. Bilingual. The restroom, again, red hoodie
oblivious. They're all wearing masks, splayed across three seats.

Punctuating the words with facial gestures. Laconic. Nod.

Now she's watching. Is this what they would say? At some distance
it's still overwhelming. I wonder why she cries, an actress, the last to arrive.
Wanton, and now their eyes are so expressive, the masks having that effect.

A tall, strong, man with rust red hair. Scottish, Viking, Celtic, skull cap.
The baby almost turned its head 180. Who's the new guy?
And why is the chief in a wheelchair? Tight purple hose. Some kind
of intervention, a seat that won't recline. Flight attention. Another operation.

Now the baby has a hoodie, plaid satchel. Consolation, distress, then reunion
in a body cast. Seascape harbor, the captain has turned on the seatbelt sign.
Is there any news? The tall guy looks like Gene Wilder. He's angry and takes a swing.
Sandwich time, resting on what could be the window ledge of a horse's stall.

So innocuous, this magic. Plastic wrap and now they all have perfect hair.
Holding a baby. Mindelo, Cabo Verde, Praia. No, these are flashbacks.
She was the real force behind it all. Descent. Red sideboard lights.
Overhead compartment. Leopard print. It clicks. They come and go.

Small Change Aubade

Microwave yesterday's coffee black and find
only dimes and old coppers
where you're sure all the bills should be.
A squeaky squawk squats in the room of your roar

while you scratch the parts that itch
yet still can't reach that hungry hole
between the up and at 'em.

A biscuit sounds good and maybe some jam
but you ain't got none of that.
You're just waking for work and to fill the place
where a body ought to be.

When you muddle through the door
your eyes barely crack, like two cold eggs
wanting back in the fridge.

You have left your wife leg-layed and snoring
and you take this for granted peace.
Oh, for the blessing of that
and your daughters waiting dead

asleep in that tender quiet of restful promise,
counting on you, of all people
to know for them the way.

To a Friend Last Seen Washed Away By a Wave of Alcohol and Drugs

We stoned our souls, chained
to razor-stained mirrors.

Crippled twins crawling on carpet,
we scavenged for cocaine grains:

bitter bright nuggets of shame.
Our vampire writhed in circles

while we cowered, not for darkness
but the shard-bearded morning

birdsongs that pilloried our ears.
I still had hands enough to count

the dying friends who'd helped me walk away.
Before I thought to ask "Did you choose neck or noose?"

I found the empty hole where you had left.
I'd sought to cool my blood, but thinned instead:

a whimper of life
coursed my dark and thirsty veins.

Until I was swept clean by a passing angel:
some God-breath surprise that happened undeserved.

Now when I pray I imagine you like me,
free.

A still and tiny monument
humbled up to grace.