

Ode to the Airport

Because I am my mother's son, I find myself at the gate two hours before departure. Burnt coffee lingers on my tongue like an unwanted guest, an overpriced ham & cheese sandwich clutched in my hand. Anxiously, I pace the white sterile corridors, akin to a father awaiting the birth of his newborn. I've mastered the art of bouncing my leg, become a genius at biting off my cuticles. Being en route to you feels like the birth of something significant. Strangers offer me a cigar, pat me on the back, and say, "Congratulations! We've both made it." I text you "I love you" three times before turning off my phone, just in case, as if it were a litany against the power of gravity. Cramped inside this metal vessel, I recall every time we've said goodbye without knowing when we could see each other again. The sky gives, and it takes. The patch of land between us is almost as resilient as us. Almost.

Until now, I perceived airports as joyful places. Consider arrivals: open arms, bouquets of flowers, and welcome home signs. There's a special tenderness in picking someone up after a trip. "Bring me your weary, you're hungry & jet lagged. I'll carry your suitcase to the car, and you can rest your head on the window." I run to greet you before you even get the chance to see me, and when we collide, I swear this place must be Eden.

These days, I tend to picture them bittersweet. I sob in your arms before going through security, convinced this time will be the last. My mind fears you'll disappear the moment I turn around, a reverse Eurydice lost between paperbacks and gossip magazines. I keep my eyes on you until I'm told to put all my liquids in a bag. The metal detector makes no sound, and I've lost you. A week later, I spend half of my earnings to go see you again. Happy Sisyphus, carrying my boulder from one country to another, hope, and longing infinitely stretching the days out. Repeatedly looking at the calendar to reassure myself time is indeed passing. I pack light because there is so much of me with you already. I left my toothbrush in your bathroom, quasi-accidentally, leaving a trail of my life behind, ensuring I can find my way back to you eventually. A thousand kilometres away, you make room for my clothes in your closet. This should do, and it does, and it does, and it does.

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