

The Last Page

The Waiting Room

This here is nowhere. A circle of whiteness squared
to still the furthest confines of the room.
Passengers pass by with nothing to declare,
papers and permissions all approved.
As ceaseless movement breaks in waves
of sound on sound, a static too thickly sewn to undo
grounds us in a place of stark sensation
where mattresses are spread thinly on the ground
and belonging can't be found in our slow translations.

We are lined in plastic chairs designed to hold
the waiting in repeated patterns of suspense.
We are kept, until our stories fracture, or go untold;

until the end of each sentence
no longer lands on our intended close,
but wavers under scrutiny so intense

it strips the light and walls of tone.
As we are ourselves staring back at ourselves
in mirrors on a windowless wall,

outside is excised and this faint resolve
flattens into a fierce, bright sterility
and homelands dissolve

into a maze of faulted memory
where landmarks skip and trade places.
Here, we cling to a new strain of fluidity

and pray, until this room is our enclave.
We mutter days to dusk until the dour
grey linoleum is bathed in real light and made

a yard where yellow lilies flower;
a street where soft rock and church bells toll successive lines
to pierce the bloom of each mistaken hour

and contort the tannoy's frequent chimes
into muezzin calls from minarets
and children's playground pantomimes;

until our conditioned air is fired
with saffron and bergamot
and a cathedral swells between the sets

of inward-facing chairs, and the mirrors lit
with votives glow softly in the dark
while the booming speaker's voice is rich

with words caught from tongues and torn apart,
which should mean *home*, but hold us here,
in a broken spell of missed departures.

Kim Lockwood