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The Room

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THE ROOM

I

There is a band of last sunlight over the driver's eyes.
He grins into his knuckles on the wheel
turning into streets you do not recognize.
You, with a sandwich in a paper bag, you
are trying desperately to remember the number of a house,
the name of a street, a landmark, anything,
before the driver swivels around with his yellow palm out.

II

Always the same: a phonecall at home at
an unreasonable hour—you then on a curb at dusk or near dusk
clicking your fingers, still tasting mustard and onions.
There are boys in gray alleys
orchestrating a tenement of tincans. There are women
with their chins to sills, dim as picture postcards from
a literary parishioner. And your stomach
rolling—you've a nose for symptoms, signs. Finally

III

under a solitary streetlamp where a puddle stands
full of orange peels fragrant as leaves
you climb onto the cement, make a bad joke, tip too much.
Upstairs there is a woman in a terrycloth robe
& puffball slippers running over the heels.
She opens the door, starts talking at once.
A cockatiel squats on the table like a lump of smoke.

IV

And you, with a sandwich and pistachio nuts in
a paper bag, your legs will shoot off the tiny bed,
you like a moth nailed to a card,
your blue socks fastened at the calves, your knees like snow.
You will hear water running in a next room
and your hands will hang huge to the floor.
While this naked rolling woman speaks hurriedly into the phone.
You breathe in and out, you've arrived, you wait for deliverance.