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ON HER FIRST TRIP, AN AIRLINE STEWARDESS
STEPS OUT ON A BALCONY

She stands in her slip,
a white figure cleaving the dark.
Washed stockings swim from her fingers
loose on the muscles of breeze.
Broad and so clear, her face bends its stare
to the light-fringed coiling of palms;
looks away, dizzy, over streetlamps
blinding as mirrors before the wild growth
that mimes the wind, trying to talk.
The grey sliver might be a beach,
its chime regular as the crickets.
But not having an ocean's sound to compare,
she hears the ocean and longs to go swimming,
longs to go out. She's arrived in the dark,
knows no one who lives in these houses
smeared and grey by the lamps
they burn to keep away thieves;
nor that the ocean is two rivers meeting,
the muddy port at the end of the streets.
She stares at the lamps that float over the water,
beyond the white furls that keep coming,
without coming close. Wonders what could float.
The silky trees churn,
hump over each other on the floodlit lawn.
She goes inside, washes her face.
Tomorrow, she promises the perfect mirror,
she will go to the beach. While all night
worn men lean against the blazing stores,
never more than half asleep.