

a selection from

*You Are No Longer in Trouble*

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*Founded in 1996 by Robert Alexander, the Marie Alexander Poetry Series is dedicated to promoting the appreciation, enjoyment, and understanding of American prose poetry. An imprint of White Pine Press, the Series publishes one to two books annually. It is our mission to publish the very best contemporary prose poetry and to carry the rich tradition of this hybrid form on into the 21st century.*

## At Least Name It What It Is

Passengers in aisle seats lean toward the middle to watch the kneeling doctor's shoe bottoms facing us. It has been too long. His arms mark a rhythm we have seen on screen, felt in our chests, a rhythm that tracks the plane's arc into Juneau where we are not supposed to land.

*Not-supposed-to* began with the call: *Is there a doctor or an EMT on board? Please ring your call button.* Call buttons glowed, punctuated by chimes. Passengers strained to see, peered between seats, leaned into the aisle. Someone pulled a man from the window seat in row 11, dragged dead weight into first class. Metal hissed on curtain rod.

It has been too long. So long that screens flicker to life as some un-press pause. So long the flight attendant runs back twice for charged portable defibrillators. So long that we all know the answer without asking.

At touchdown, with phones back on, murmurs and beeps incoming, a woman three rows in front of me calls out: *Those who believe, pray for the one that is hurt.* The woman sitting next to me calls back: *I'm praying, sister,* and flips through a magazine full of recipes. Fingernails gleam over the glossy pages. Clatter of definitive pageturn. Amen.

My English-teacher self gets bothered by her word choice. *Hurt?*

Use *dead, suffering.* Hurt: an accident soothed by apology. Dead: definitive, done. If this is a prayer, it's going to go unanswered, so at least ask with precision. At least name it what it is:

*Witness, not bystander. Death, not medical emergency.*

In Juneau, one boy chirps and sings as his mother walks behind him, providing narration. *Now we will step forward to get back on the plane. Now you should look in front of you.* Her hands, a steady pressure on his shoulders. Her legs follow his lead in a stiff dance, holding him to this moment, down the jetway, down the aisle, back into his seat among his siblings, a few rows away from where the body once sat. She tells him everything is still real, how it is to go back.

In flight again, we become the dream-blurb of the body now stashed below. The doctor, arms tired from pumping, leans against the window. The man's wife takes her seat next to an empty seat and closes her eyes. The flight attendant dabs her eyes with tissue as she swings through the cabin, garbage bag sagging between her hands.

In Anchorage at two a.m., after we waited hours in Juneau, after we missed our connecting flight to Fairbanks, a chemo-ravaged woman stands quiet as her husband demands to talk to a person who can explain what we're going to get in return for our time. The customer service agent, exhausted, replies, *There is no person, sir. Only the website.*

I go to the customer service website. I write that I watched a man die on a floor with my headphones in and a comedy on pause. But I don't tell them the woman in the seat in front of me needed to get home that night because the dogsitter left that morning, and that she said, *I don't*

*need to spend my one day of rest before going back to work cleaning up dog shit.* I don't tell them the Make-a-Wish Foundation girl with the prosthetic leg was on her way to see the aurora, or that I was flying back from trying to say goodbye to my father, who was dying himself.

Grading papers my first night home, I think of the flight attendant. How when she began the speech that batters itself daily against travel-dulled minds, her voice broke as she swallowed tears while her co-workers stood in the aisle buckling and unbuckling emptiness into circles of seatbelt. And how I listened to every word.

selection

selecſtion [sifˈlekʃiːn] noun 1. [uncountable] the careful choice of a particular person or thing from a group:

The Health Authority is not involved in staff selection and recruitment. Our deputy manager can supply details of the job, financial and business terms. Selection methods in plant breeding based on mode of reproduction

This article discusses Selection methods in plant breeding based on mode of reproduction. Below are a selection of the documents from a cache of a quarter-million confidential American diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks. A small number of names and passages in some of the cables have been removed by The New York Times to protect diplomats' confidential sources, to keep from compromising American intelligence efforts or to protect the privacy of ordinary citizens. UPDATED June 19, 2011. A Selection From the Cache of Diplomatic Dispatches.