2011

Greyhound Days

Debra Marquart
Iowa State University, marquart@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs
Part of the Poetry Commons

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs/153. For information on how to cite this item, please visit http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html.

This Creative Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Publications by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Greyhound Days

Abstract
Because your mother is the Typhoid Mary
of travel. Because lightning, blizzards,
everything but locusts, plague her travel days.
Because that one time in Minneapolis,
some pilot-error, failing engine part, or
threat of nuclear disaster necessitated
an overnight stay, she now refuses to fly.

Disciplines
Poetry

Comments
Greyhound Days

Because your mother is the Typhoid Mary of travel. Because lightning, blizzards, everything but locusts, plague her travel days. Because that one time in Minneapolis, some pilot-error, failing engine part, or threat of nuclear disaster necessitated an overnight stay, she now refuses to fly.

Too often, she will recount for you the cold shuttle ride to the hotel with the other stranded passengers. No PJs, toothbrush, or clean undies where all night she watched the green hinge click of digits until the three a.m. wake-up call. Besides, she says, what sane person sets off in Bismarck westbound for Bozeman by catching an eastbound flight to Minneapolis? So it's Greyhound days for her. And for us, this day after Christmas, it's the drop-off drive to the truck stop on the unlit edge of town, where we stamp our feet and puff our cheeks in the snowy dark,
waiting for the Greyhound with the goth girls and the tattooed boys, with the gaunt-cheeked, luggage-less chain smoker, and that one young mother who’s been criss-crossing the country with two toddlers and a colicky baby since your own Greyhound days. You realize

at the purr of the diesel engine approaching and the downshift of gears, at the slash of air brakes, before the folding doors unfold and passengers disembark, you realize you do not want to let your mother go alone into this high northern night through mountain passes, frozen wheat fields, past oil rigs pumping thin elbows in the dark. But she grabs the nearest passenger, the scruffy-bearded, nose-pierced boy with jet-black hair dyed, just like yours was in the eighties, and begins to drill him—

Is it warm on the bus? Are there seats available? Is the driver nice? —which, he answers to your amazement, tossing his smoke to the sidewalk in a splash of sparks, making you realize your mother
would be an excellent person to have along at a rock concert or the holocaust or any other huge natural disaster, this survivor, who grabs her floral bag to board the steps not looking back, as you watch her through smoky glass, moving down the aisle, checking each seat, row by row, with those eyes that always saw everything, until she chooses the best one, left side, one row behind the driver, and stashes her bag, never once looking back at you, down below in the cold, waving goodbye, be careful, waving safe travels, waving love you, even as the driver downshifts, you see your mother leans forward to chat—dark silhouette of her hand on the headrest—even as he undoes the brake, turns off the interior light and the bus jerks to a start, you realize you are still waving, waving at the darkness now, waving at the spot where you imagine she must be sitting.