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Fear of Flying

LAUREN PONTIOUS

I watched, as you picked up your bags
and strolled up the ramp.
We didn’t say goodbye.
You were preoccupied
with an old brown briefcase
that wouldn’t snap shut.
You said you’d call
when you landed at LaGuardia.
You had no fear of flying.

It’s not the flying I’m afraid of.
I remember too vividly
the cell phone calls
from a plane over Pennsylvania,
all the people
who just wanted to fly home,
and instead
flew into someone’s office.

And what do you say,
on a phone call like that?
How can words ever express
the way you breathe that night?
Or the feeling in my gut
when you lightly brush my shoulder?

Oh, they checked your bags
they checked your photo ID
they even checked your shoes.
So what am I afraid of?

All week they’ve cancelled flights
and set up “no-fly zones”
because the Superbowl
and Disneyland
must be kept safe.

Tomorrow you fly home.
You’ll tell me about your interview,
about your cat,
and why you called me from in front of a diner
I've only seen on TV.
All the pieces of you
I may never get to share
I'll tell you how I missed you,
that I'm glad you're home.
But I'll never mention
that my heart stopped
every time the phone rang.