

Heightened Awareness

Category: Poems

written by Carl V. Tyler | May 24, 2019

No power-down switch to arrest
That incessant activity of the mind and senses
Not even for our wedding anniversary
Getaway.

At the airport my eyes reflexively dart
From the cashier's cheery smile to fix on her arm
Laid bare by her Dunkin' Donuts uniform
And the glaring track-mark trail
As she carefully hands me my scalding hot coffee.

On board American Airlines my ears instinctively pinpoint
That paroxysmal brassy cough of the man in seat 20C
Debating whether it could be pertussis.

Waiting to board the Norwegian Cruise ship
I automatically analyze the biomechanics
Of the slender attendant as he squares his shoulders, tightens his core
To push up 30-degree inclined ramp
The woman in wheelchair three times his weight
Wondering if he is in pain.

Onboard I can't help but take notice
The antalgic gaits of elders nursing painful knees and hips
The unmodulated volume and sloppy enunciation of drinkers
Circling the bar puffy-eyed at 10 AM
The thrust and parry of couples arguing viciously

And your breathlessness as you pause
Climbing that third flight of stairs
Worrying if it could be some subtle sign of coronary disease—
You know how deceptive it can be in women....

But it's also this inescapable heightened awareness
That prompts me to pause and relish the sensate intensities
Of afternoon ocean breezes tussling my hair
And chaotic rhythms of blue-green Caribbean waves
As we sit secluded on our private balcony and read side by side

And to savor that evening
The familiar warmth of your hand
As we slice our anniversary passion-fruit cake
Hand over hand
Just like the first time.