

**Isabelle Lau**

Following (Lone)liness with an Airplane of Thought

this piece on one of the wooden chairs outside Starbucks-- with my hands on my knees and my fingers flexed for meditation, and a cup of fresh white chocolate mocha on the table right under my nose to channel the Vollmann in me-- where I called forth my muse (whether or not she came is an entirely different subject) and started thinking abstract in a stream of consciousness.

I STARTed

Ignore the woman who is asking for change, because she has no home she says, for any recyclables you might have, including your cigarette butts, the ones she can use to burn away her lungs or loneliness (whichever she's in the mood for) just like you do sometimes

When are we old enough to become a credible source of knowledge about abstract thoughts like freedom, loneliness and courage?

your mother says he misses being loved and  
you try to pry this sadness out of him but  
when he looks back or when you secretly  
look at his back while he watches TV alone  
at 3 in the morning

when you remember your father and his  
Chinese cigarette butts, the ones that are  
scattered around his home in China in  
various makeshift ashtrays for you to count  
when he leaves you alone at night so he  
can smoke and dance and drink in peace  
without your concerned eyes boring into  
his because

he can pull himself together and look pleasantly surprised again, like he didn't expect you would embrace him because he didn't ask for it, didn't want it, didn't need it since he has everything he ever wished for and it would be senseless for you to wonder if he's lonely, if he was the one who left or the one who was left behind, and

all you see is an old lonely man, your old man, who always looks pleasantly surprised when you embrace him and who returns the gesture like a small child hugging his mother when there's a storm outside or a monster hiding under his bed to be scared of, and then he pulls away when you do as if he did so first, so

and freedom to you **is** sweetest in your favorite place, in airports, the no-man's-land of  
prison to live finally live, where you are away from both your parents and can forget their  
between, in between other cultures, in **between** leaving and returning, in between  
really makes people lonely because if you can make the world, everything and everyone,

loneliness, where you lug around the same bag you brought when you left your mother's  
**loneliness** because you are too busy marveling at the place where you are **in**  
homes, but really you think that believing you have a home to leave or return to is what  
your home **too** then you will no longer leave or be left

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but your mother always says your father  
was happy to leave her 14 years ago with  
nothing but loneliness on her part, but you  
know you were there, during all those years

she recoiled from your embrace as if you  
were the monster who crept up to onto  
into her from under the bed and ate her life  
away and then kept her in a lonely house  
that was not the house of her dreams that  
was not even hers just like the heart of



this monster, whom she has learned to love  
and whose child she has been raising alone  
in a house where no friends of hers are  
allowed, not like she has anybody to invite  
actually, since

she doesn't have any friends because they're  
not allowed in her life by this monster of a  
man who now finds her too lonely and fat  
to be attractive and reduces her to a cook, a  
nanny and a maid for himself, his daughter  
and his second home, respectively,

where he tried creeping up on you too  
after failing to steal your loyalty from your  
father, a feat he has accomplished with your  
mother who started treating you no longer  
like family but like a tenant who cannot eat  
the best of the food she cooks nor use the  
appliances she buys because she does not  
eat or use these things either unless done  
for the monster-man alone and

she wants you to be like her, except she gets  
bribed with Mac and Chanel, and you, you  
alone raged against

the disease of loneliness your mother  
(willingly) falls for time and again because  
it is a disease that comes in various forms  
and to her it always comes wrapped in  
luxury, something your parents have in  
common for once, but to you

loneliness comes wrapped around freedom

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loneliness, where you lug around the same bag you brought when you left your mother's **loneliness** because you are too busy marveling at the place where you are **in** homes, but really you think that believing you have a home to leave or return to is what your home **too** then you will no longer leave or be left

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