

4. Amtrak Princess

When I get to South Station
I tell them I'm a deadhead, I tell them I'm your daughter,
and they let me climb on, college girl,
with my index cards and fiction scraps,
spilling out of a fringed suede bag,
and my mother's honeymoon Samsonite
holding my other pair of jeans.
This was before they made clothes for fat girls
and I took what I could get,
grateful for the Wranglers and the tight tight turtlenecks,
and the Quincy boys who came upstairs anyway
and said I was pretty and said I was lucky
I could go anywhere for free.

When I get to New Haven
I say I'm here to meet you, I say I'll have a lite beer,
and they all step aside, handsome men,
in uniforms or linen suits,
drinking Budweisers or shots of Jack,
and they tell me how proud you are of me,
although you never say those words.
This was when teenagers were legal age,
and I'd do anything for you,
grateful for attention from the only man I loved,
so I drank what I thought made me girlish and cool,
and thought I looked pretty and knew I was lucky
I could go anywhere for free.

Not Sylvia's daddy, or Gidget's, but a Goldilocks daddy,
just tyrant enough to make me suck in my gut
and lie about sneaking Quincy boys upstairs;
but hero enough to carry your dead wife's Samsonite
in one hand while your other hand guides me
by the small of my fat back down the aisles
of your steel cathedral, saying
this is my daughter, this is my college girl;
and I have never felt so beautiful
as I did every month on that Montrealer,

deadhead, drop out, Amtrak princess,
with my Bic pen-scribble on an index card,
Dear Daddy, I can't tell you in person,
and you looked at me with my own eyes
and said *Come home.*