

## Hotel Life

Larry taught me how to live out of a Motel 6.  
Not just one. All of them.

Northside, southside, west and east.

*Living* is a stretch. More like nap stations.  
We weren't natural disaster refugees, but maybe  
we weren't far off.

My mother liked Larry. He looked like Kimbo  
Slice but laughed like Duke Ellington.  
He made sure I never slept under a bridge.  
He was like Too Short with fortune cookie  
phrases. I met him as a fry cook  
at a river-docked restaurant.

The one's where the waitresses sing  
and someone's uncle always has a heart attack.  
The one's where you have to wear a trash bag doing the dishes  
or you'll have to throw away your clothes after the night shift.  
The one's where Narcan comes in handy when you least expect  
it and all the popular deep-fried hushpuppies are sold out.  
The one's where George Orwell worked when he was poor  
in Paris. I refer to this time of my life as *Down and Out in California*.

If you're wondering what the threshold  
is in regards to living at a motel,  
it's being able to say you've witnessed  
an ambulance wheel out a dead body  
on multiple occasions.

I always wondered if some died in the room I was staying in.

Motels are like fireflies.  
Solar flares. A dumpsite  
your grandfather takes  
you to in the middle  
of the night and forbids  
you to ask questions.

Larry once told me *never stay in the same room  
consecutively and always tip your waiter*.

There are codes amongst thieves.  
No matter what anyone tells you.

I forgot about the same room business.  
That's how I met Anthony. He and his girlfriend  
followed bible salesmen from Alabama to Colorado.

When they had enough dough  
they landed in the golden state.  
It was my second night in room  
36. Anthony was crying outside  
the door. His girlfriend was paying  
for their hotel room inside  
and he was stuck in the cold.

We played spades and drank miller  
high life. My mother liked him too.  
A southern prejudice they could both  
relate to. I took Anthony into my  
business to help with their room fees.  
*Business* is a stretch. More like a 60  
minutes episode.

Which means we played a lot of pool,  
rode the train across town and watched  
the sunset across the riverbank. The city  
was not kind to them. One day he didn't answer  
his phone. One day I found the room empty.  
One day they were gone.

