

# Poem: "Train Ride"

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Riding back from our day in the Big City  
on the sluggish old New York, New Haven, and Hartford,  
hot as blazes, train windows that couldn't be opened, air-  
conditioning years away, or broken, and dusty blue plush seats —  
all romantic enough. Also it was very late, black  
outside the black glossy plate-glass squares that shone our images  
back at us as you leaned a little against my shoulder,  
then finally leaned your head against my shoulder.

No, I'm making that up. It didn't happen that way.  
Your head, I think, was turned away from me, against  
the corner where the seat meets the wall of the car. ...  
What happened, very slowly, was that the shaking

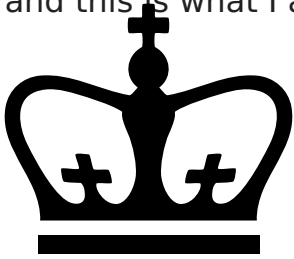
of the train began to send your pink hand closer and  
closer to mine as my hand trembled on the seat. Closer,  
closer, as if my hand were some benign little animal lying  
in wait for its companion, O, how much I wanted to take

your hand, to tame it, claim it as mine — and hoped  
that you would be willing to let me. That was what  
the train ride home meant to me — your hand slipping towards mine,  
and I pretending that I had nothing to do with it,

that coming together would be an inescapable conclusion,  
a result of the laws of physics when finally they touched,  
those two hands that at that moment seemed neither to belong  
to you or to me; that no intention could bring your hand

to me, that our touch would be the result of motion, fate,  
and time until I touched your fingers or they touched mine.  
And when they did I took them and then your palm  
in my hand and we began. And this is what I understood

as poetry, that it would come to me when I was ready,  
and this is what I also first understood as love



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