

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.

