

Susan Brennan

MORNING BIRD

• • •

I'm flying through cloud cradles on the red-eye.
A stewardess finally clicks off the overheads.
I pretend I'm a character in a book - - everything suddenly curious:
week-old crackers in my pocket; crackers from the funeral home,
no, from the deli on the way to the funeral home
where my brother, Justin, and I stopped for split pea
remembering how alive Dad looked, a damn smile even - -

turbulence persuades me to open my eyes.
The wing stretches from my shoulder, wing-lights streak
gray marblings across its span into the indigo atmosphere.
I don't know what to call my life - - sailing
from evening to dawn in four short hours.
Earlier, I met new people in a glass-pipe head-shop:
we drank Chai tea and remembered our separate childhood
family vacations under clear stars; I ate a pancake, warm as a face

and we tried to name the moons of the solar system: Europa, Callisto, Miranda,
Triton, Charon. I left to watch the sunset on the beach
and had the feeling I could forget everything: the urgent
train ride home, relatives from Canada, their hands on my shoulders,
his cold forehead, five feet of snow and falling.
I am on the beach, I told myself, swarmed by painters and incense:
Chronic, Mango, Jungle Love; Surreal nude angles; palm trees dabbed on a spoon;

sun blown faces of the homeless; a little girl transports sand
in two hour-glass fists spilt by wind;
a father's white blouse ripples after her.
A yellow-green shell, a slim radiant,
flashes and I almost lose it in the infinite
shades of beige and I remember my first memory:
two years old, Justin and I holler and chase down waves

and turn from the pelted tide towards our parents
with their fire and pan-fried fish. Mom and Dad are surrounded
by a half circle of dark blue and purple oysters,
shells the shape of tongues pressed into the sand bar
and I say, God, I don't care if I believe in you,
just hold me tonight, no strings attached;
sing me my dead love songs,
then hush me, the moon's child, asleep on a morning bird.