

5) A SHORT STORY:

– The R2 Nord Line –

The train emerges from the black tunnel into orange morning light. I squint my eyes as the train car fills with the hazy brilliance of the sun. Outside the dusty windows, I watch as buildings clad in stone white stucco and red tiles whiz by, basking under the Mediterranean sky.

Two police officers standing nearby chatter in Catalan. I feel shut out from the lives they discuss so animatedly in a language I do not understand. Lives born and lived in this city by the sea. Lives I will never know, but can only guess at or imagine. But imagination is an empty confection, conjuring vibrant scenes of friends, food, and flashing streetlights held merely in the head, but not in the hand. I feel a dissonance, gazing sleepily at the ochre landscape outside, with the sights inside my mind. Much like memory I suppose.

The train arrives at its final stop, and I follow the flow of passengers onto an airport shuttle bus. Later on, it lurches to a stop outside the terminal, where I pause and step away from the herd rushing determinedly towards ticket counters and boarding passes. As I light a cigarette, I shiver slightly in the crisp morning air. Its blue fingers graze my skin, like a lover left behind in bed, never to be seen again. It seems strange that this cold air and orange sunlight exist in the same world, are sight and skin truly experiencing the same thing? Or are they planted in separate universes, grasping at different things? I exhale the harsh gray smoke from my lungs, watching it dissipate and disappear into the sky.

I drag my bags and body drowsily through airport security. Walking towards the airplane gate, I feel like I have already entered a different land. But I am not yet ready to leave this city behind. Already I feel it slipping away, like a scarf blown away by the wind. Was it ever really mine? Was I ever actually here? I watch helplessly as these memories begin to wash away into the murky turquoise waters of something dreamt, or imagined. ❀