

# On the Airbridge

Phillip Louie

I know the tune of final boarding call,  
in syllables that register and fall,  
and sweep me on the airbridge, lost between  
the gate and cabin door. Ahead in line,  
I see a couple hand-in-hand; their hair  
has greyed and wintered in each other's care.  
She rests against his shoulder, hugs him close  
and glances up, then once again but slow,  
though slower still, until they stop and stay:  
the seasons settle in the way they gaze.  
I lose them in the crowd and strain to hear  
their whispered syllables caress the air.  
I wonder at the life they chose, the vows  
they hold: the old words, intimately mouthed;  
and in the look they share, their vows stay sweet.

The airbridge clears—my chest unknots and settles.  
Alone, I'm filled with private syllables.  
I know. I've known my own behind that gate;  
mine cannot come with me, nor can I stay.  
Is this what gratitude is meant to be—  
to witness this, to bless it as I ache;  
to know the upward glance endures, not breaks?  
That look—the one you gave and I adored—  
it's of this earth; it beckons me aboard.  
The cabin door awaits, though bittersweet.

