

In an Airplane Lavatory on Route to Her New Home

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Of course they cannot figure out what is going on in here. Forty-five minutes and the OCCUPIED sign is still on. Passengers are kicking the door and yelling *are you taking a bath?*

At least she doesn't hear them. She is concentrating. Her tiny hearing aides hidden by her hair are no more functional than cowrie shells. She is not disabled, others are. She mouths *nebekh*, shaking her head when she sees a blind man with a seeing eye dog, or watches a teenager in an electric wheelchair whizzing by, although "she walks so slowly she could be standing still," a phrase my father would intone waiting impatiently for her down the block.

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In these cramped quarters she is all efficiency. She sits on the closed toilet bowl, Millie's lacquerware tray and the mortar on her lap. She mashes her pills with the pestle. I am allowed to fill a plastic cup with water, snap the tab off a can of liquid nutrition. She is smiling as she unfurls the peg tub jutting from her belly and deftly crowns it with her funnel and pours.

All items are dried and stashed away in a Meier & Frank shopping bag. We emerge as normal as everyone else buckled-up in their seats, who like us, later, or sooner will die.

NOTE

nebekh: Yiddish expression meaning "unlucky, pitiable person"