

Getting There

How far is it?

How far is it now?

The gigantic gorilla interior

Of the wheels move, they appall me ---

The terrible brains

Of Krupp, black muzzles

Revolving, the sound

Punching out Absence! Like cannon.

It is Russia I have to get across, it is some was or other.

I am dragging my body

Quietly through the straw of the boxcars.

Now is the time for bribery.

What do wheels eat, these wheels

Fixed to their arcs like gods,

The silver leash of the will ----

Inexorable. And their pride!

All the gods know destinations.

I am a letter in this slot!

I fly to a name, two eyes.

Will there be fire, will there be bread?

Here there is such mud.

It is a trainstop, the nurses

Undergoing the faucet water, its veils, veils in a nunnery,

Touching their wounded,

The men the blood still pumps forward,

Legs, arms piled outside

The tent of unending cries ----

A hospital of dolls.

And the men, what is left of the men

Pumped ahead by these pistons, this blood

Into the next mile,

The next hour ----

Dynasty of broken arrows!

How far is it?

There is mud on my feet,

Thick, red and slipping. It is Adam's side,

This earth I rise from, and I in agony.

I cannot undo myself, and the train is steaming.

Steaming and breathing, its teeth

Ready to roll, like a devil's.

There is a minute at the end of it

A minute, a dewdrop.

How far is it?

It is so small

The place I am getting to, why are there these obstacles ----

The body of this woman,

Charred skirts and deathmask

Mourned by religious figures, by garlanded children.

And now detonations ----

Thunder and guns.

The fire's between us.

Is there no place
Turning and turning in the middle air,
Untouchable and untouchable.
The train is dragging itself, it is screaming ----
An animal
Insane for the destination,
The bloodspot,
The face at the end of the flare.
I shall bury the wounded like pupas,
I shall count and bury the dead.
Let their souls writhe in like dew,
Incense in my track.
The carriages rock, they are cradles.
And I, stepping from this skin
Of old bandages, boredoms, old faces

Step up to you from the black car of Lethe,
Pure as a baby.

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About the Author

Sylvia Plath (1932 - 1963) was born in Boston. Her father was a professor of biology at Boston University, and had specialized in bees. He has been characterized as authoritarian and died of diabetes in 1940 when Plath was eight years old...

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