

The Loong Palace

The bar staff remember me by name,
With the delight of a friend they know.
The scene, just like when last left, the same,
As if time had stopped five months ago.
I smile at the slit skirted waiting staff,
English names pinned above their tiny breasts,
They're keen to practice English and to laugh,
I slide onto a stool, the important foreign guest.

Linda makes my drink with care, the others watch,
Lit and lustred in the mirrored wall, which shines
The expensive brandies and single malted scotch.
My own face too, reflected with the room behind,
Where marble pillars rise into the overcooled air,
Cut to look like palms with leaves of jade,
Plush cloths draping windows and the empty chairs,
Polished woods with flourishes of gilt inlaid.

This ambience of luxury and its wealthy airs,
Languish in the pool, gym and massage offered,
In tea ceremonies and bathrobes of rooms upstairs,
With toilet roll's pointed ends and tuned down beds.
In the cheap array of staff given worthless chores,
Like the boy whose only job is warning of a shallow stair,
While opening the automatic doors.
Like three young girls fawning over one customer.

A lady in a black long dress starts playing
A piano and softly sings a well-known song.
"Is that English or Chinese that she's saying?"
Cindy giggles, swaps my drink with another one.
Cute I think, but too young, she'd waste my week,
I'll have one last drink then still buzzing depart
For the swanky roof top bars and clubs to meet,
The nubile beauties, husband seeking, in Beijing's heart.

I'll come back late, a stunning woman on my arm,
Her heels will, across the foyer floor, click click,
Drawn by my business credit and foreign charm.
The hotel's magic fools us both into believing I am rich,
And important, a rock star and hotshot lover.
In my room, low lamp light and playlist complete the spell,
We'll breakfast in bed and take all day to recover,
In the king size rooms of the Loong Palace hotel.