



# Part 1

## Ms Nelson

The boy leans against the smooth stainless steel  
of the baggage carousel  
in International Arrivals,  
scans the faces of travellers  
his eyes wide  
his forehead creased.

Behind him  
wheeled Samsonites  
backpacks  
child seats in plastic bags  
jostle down the conveyor belt.

I wait  
beside my jetlagged students  
in the Customs line,  
watch him  
from a distance.

Thin, brown,  
alone  
he looks like  
baggage.

## **Thabo**

*The faces  
of passengers  
are all colours  
but I do not see  
the one I look for.*

*Travelling people  
look past  
reach around me  
for their baggage.*

*A voice  
through the speaker  
calls out names of cities  
Toronto  
Los Angeles  
Tokyo  
and more things  
I do not understand.*

*Languages  
swirl around me  
like birds*

*words  
don't settle  
fly awa  
through the hissing  
glass doors.*

## Leah

The bat cracks  
a ball soars  
towards the field lights

Over the ball field a plane soars  
as it glides in for a landing  
at the International Airport  
the other end  
of the city.

I watch the lights from centre field  
wonder  
if it's my sister coming home

or some other exotic  
unconnected  
strangers  
arriving from the other end  
of the earth.

A raindrop  
hits my cheek  
always a threat  
in fall ball season.

I keep an eye  
on the sky  
wait for the fly ball  
to drop into my glove.

## Ms Nelson

Most parents have arrived  
rushed past me  
embraced offspring  
pulled them  
    jet-lagged,  
    nostalgic,  
    laden with souvenirs  
    from their Japanese hosts  
out to the parkade.

My eyes burn  
from too many hours awake,  
cheeks ache  
from smiling  
professionally.

With only one student left  
I send my grateful colleagues home.  
No need for us all to wait for stragglers  
and I have no children  
no husband  
waiting for me.

October rain splashes down outside.  
Dreariness swishes in  
through automatic doors.

## ***Brittany***

Ms Nelson stands guard  
under the airport's massive  
art installation  
    indigenous carvings,  
    looming wooden  
    First Nations welcome people.

My mother is late  
again.

My phone buzzes  
as I connect to the world.  
I text my sister.

### **Where are u?**

She answers

**Mom's emerg shift ran late.  
traffi**

#jet lag  
#13 hours from Tokyo  
#12 days away from home

That can wait.  
Typical.

## **Thabo**

*I am still waiting  
after three hours.*

*Before she left  
the old woman told me,  
“Wait here.  
I will get food.”  
Her eyes looked everywhere  
except at me.*

*She took my travel book  
my papers,  
smacked my head when I asked,  
“Can I go with you?”*

*Now  
I am still waiting.*

*I did what I was told.  
I don't know what else  
to do.*

## Ms Nelson

There's always one parent  
tied up  
forgetful.

This time it's Brittany's.  
She fumes  
tosses her hair.  
I spy the Tim Hortons doughnut shop,  
Canadian comfort food

tell her I'll be back.

Out of the corner of my eye  
At the base of the Clayoquot welcome figures  
I see the boy again.

In the shadow of the outstretched cedar arms  
he hugs his knees  
rocks back and forth.



**Leah**

Sweat  
chills my skin.

My sister has arrived  
from her international travels  
needs her carriage.

Traffic jam t the airport  
means Brit will be sitting  
spitting  
mad.

I close the car window,  
long to pull o  
my cleats  
wash the home base dust  
from my hair.

Mom grips the wheel  
peers through the windshield.  
She smells of antiseptic  
latex-free gloves  
sudden death

ER smells.

But this  
being late  
is her real emergency  
today.

## ***Brittany***

Ms Nelson must be pissed  
that she has to wait –  
some legal thing.

She stops  
in front of a black kid  
who leans against the plexiglass wall  
around the totem pole  
bends over to hold out the bag

and I think

*She should watch  
those honey crullers.*

The boy takes one  
downs it,  
looks at her with big dark eyes.

His clothes are light  
for west coast October rain  
but they look good  
on him.

I take a selfie  
with the boy in the background  
post it on Instagram.

#tired of waiting

## Leah

When we finally walk  
through the automatic glass doors  
into the warmth of Arrivals  
Brittany isn't mad  
like I expected.  
She's head to head  
with her teacher  
who holds a slim, brown boy,  
by the arm.

Brit's excited.  
"He's been abandoned.  
Who knows  
what they intended?  
He's just been left  
at the airport  
like unclaimed baggage."

When Mom says  
sorry we're late,  
Ms Nelson waves her apology away.

"This boy needs help.  
It's a good thing I'm still here."

A Sikh man in a uniform  
and turban  
walks towards us.  
His eyes are tired.  
He walks like his feet hurt.

Mom hugs my sister,  
waves at me to follow.  
"Thanks, Ms Nelson.  
We'll get this one home."