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## American Airlines

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*John Hodgen*

## American Airlines

The gate announcement in Terminal A comes on repeatedly,  
mechanically, institutionally,  
a woman's voice, weary, muddled, each word a morphine drip hanging  
over a cliff above the sea.  
No one's listening, her voice looping like a snake, like gauze wrapping  
slowly around our heads. She's  
saying that American Airlines has opened a new lounge for people in  
uniform, that service members  
can go to the end of the terminal to a room across from Lost and Found.  
Lost and Found, she says,  
again, and in that moment she is Dylan's Isis, the Oracle at Delphi, the  
Mother of Imminent Doom.  
And soldiers are crawling, serpentine, escaping, evading to a service  
members lounge. Other soldiers  
report directly to Lost and Found, where they stand like the terracotta  
warriors in the mausoleum  
of the first Qin Emperor, like an army of the afterlife, like the ghosts of  
the stones they have become.  
But here, suddenly, a small boy runs halfway around our seating area and  
comes to a stop. He shimmers,  
shudders in absolute delight. He looks as if he is about to explode. He is  
so filled, so utterly round  
with happiness it is as if his joy will spill out of him if he leans either way.  
He is like a clay rainwater  
vessel outside a temple in Bagram when the earth begins to tremble. His  
eyes lock on his mother  
behind me. He is playing hide and seek. He leans left. He leans right. He  
is lost. He is found.