

She went to the highest point of the city.  
Sat for some time in the shade of a cherry tree,  
then walked up the steps under a crisscrossed concrete sky.<sup>1</sup>

It snowed that day. On a warm summer's afternoon, while the days were still so long.  
And we looked up towards the sky, shielding our eyes against the harsh sun,  
as delicate flakes fluttered between the wrought iron bars  
of the balconies above our heads.  
It was the first I'd seen.

A few moments later and it was over, and another still and she was gone.  
And I wonder now if it really did happen that way or if another moment attached itself  
to this one.<sup>2</sup>

She told me that we were seven hundred miles above the sea.  
*That's why the air is so dry.*  
*Seven hundred miles?*  
*Yes, There's no humidity up here.*  
*I see.*

Later when I was alone I wondered if, like a broken telephone,  
these things could spread. But when I looked it up I found only one result,  
*Not many people know this but most of the city is 700 miles above sea level,*  
and I wondered if she'd seen it there. And thought best to leave it that way.

Imagine what seven hundred miles would feel like. It must be so cold up there.  
And the air so thin.  
I read that if we go above eight thousand meters our functions begin to shut down  
from the lack of oxygen in the air and our bodies rapidly begin to die.  
It's known as the 'death zone'.

*Nothing prepares you for that thin air, they say, it makes you delirious.*

And 8000 meters is only five and a half miles.  
Its been on my mind a lot lately, don't ask me why.

---

<sup>1</sup> If you wanted to go there you have to take the metro to Fuencarrela and cross the street to the park. See if you can find the levelling plaque. I'm not sure if there even is one there or if there ever was but if you find it do let me know what it says. These plaques are all over the city and in a semi-circular square a small stone slab marks the geographical centre, the point from which all roads lead out. Zero Kilometre. If I'd known to look I would have found it there on the sidewalk directly in front of the clock tower.

<sup>2</sup> It can't really have been summer if the cherry trees were in bloom.  
Maybe you remember, because I don't.

She asked me to meet her at the station, beside the park where the fallen angel stands at six hundred and sixty meters above the sea. But when I got there, there were so many exits and I didn't know which one to find her at.

And so I waited for some time. I thought of trying to find a phone box, to call the numbers on the folded piece of paper in my pocket. But I was worried if I did I'd miss her, and so I waited but she never came.

And when I grew tired of waiting I walked the short distance to the museum, past the twisting concrete pillar at its doors. Once inside I wandered through the rooms until I settled before a photograph of a Hydrangea, in pale tones of washed out greys. It seemed strange that so much of the image was taken up by the blank surface of the table and the glass within which it stood, so that the flower had to gently dip its head to fit itself within the frame.

A single stem, which spoke to me of loneliness,  
had absentmindedly been abandoned there.<sup>3</sup>

I planned to leave a note to say I'd waited there but now my hands feel numb  
and I can't hold the pen the same way to form the words.  
You see I never learnt to write like you, with letters curling up and curling down,  
gently grazing the line above and line below.

On the back of a postcard with red carnations on the front.  
But I never really liked carnations anyhow, so any other flower will do.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> I'd like something to remember it by, but if you can't find it, then any other flower will do.  
There's a florist there by the Oporto metro station, you'll see it at the end of the row of trees.  
I don't know if it is open everyday but maybe they'll have a hydrangea there and they'll let you take a photo.  
But if you have to buy one, buy two because they should never stand alone.

<sup>4</sup> You can write it out again for me. That is if you wouldn't mind.  
But if you don't know what to say don't send it, just keep it for me until I come again.