

GOING TO THE BATHROOM IN CENTRAL BOOKING ●

Emily Hyland

When the officer walks me
into the cell, I

see the metal toilet
in the open

in the left corner
by the bars. It is not even

in the back. There are
twelve bars. When I tried to

remember everything, I
counted the bars

to remember
twelve bars. Eighteen

other women when
I arrived, two benches

both taken, the
vent amassed with dust a

lint trap thick. I
sit on the floor. Come to

be again, gather myself, touch
my wrists, blood

bangles from cuffs. Remember
my body, the

brush of air on my skin, the
pressure of urine

above and behind my
pubic bone, I look again

at the metal toilet and
my bladder remembers it has

now been hours
and I decide to hold it because

how long can this
possibly take,

someone must have
told my sister, there must

be some
lawyer on the way. I know

there is a lawyer on the way. The
lawyer must be on the way. The

only place to really sit is
near the toilet; the

unit is particularly
full of rancor on this

muggy August day; the
soldered alloy

calls to my guts, a
magnet for release and

I admit to myself how
badly I need to go; I

tell myself we are just a bunch
of women sitting on the floor.

Someone in here has
pulled down her pants and

let the urine flow. I'm
almost sure.

I'm going to have to
do this soon so I

might as well as do it now, so I
sort of ask to no one at all

*what do we do
when we need to go? A*

cellmate tells me
yell to the CO

*for toilet tissue and she'll
bring you*

*some from the roll. I
thank my friend and*

press my body to the bars,
it feels

unnatural to shout
not like to Mom from

the TV room when
she'd call for dinner and

we'd call back. The group is
amused by

my soft caw out so
someone hollers

and I am grateful
her voice

booms and bellows for me
down the hall

and the CO comes and
gives me a few sheets. Thank

god I only have to pee. I

study the

toilet, my
complete foe, and

see the gook and crud and film
around the seat. I

plan to squat. I
take a breath and look around,

unbutton and
unzip my jeans, and

slowly pull the denim down and
as I start to feel the stream

I start to feel
a fart come out

I can't control, it's
loud and long,

a foghorn blow
and thick with shame

and on the beat
one peer roars out loud

*hot damn this bitch has
got some gas*

*she could
shoot a car across the state*

another cackles loud and
slaps her leg. The whole cell

is rolling on the ground.
Indisposed, I

wipe so quick
I feel the wet all

down my thigh.
I sort of roll my eyes

then smile too,
realize the glue

in this long short spell,
any chance to break

the buzz of dwell and
hot ennui an act of craft. I

have more left so
toot again, and

we all laugh
so hard it hurts,

almost as much
as our bracelets of bruise

or concrete floor
where we all will

together later lay our heads
and wait our turns until we go.