

The Lady Who Gets Arrested

Y York

I don't think this was my fault, this arrest, I'm just trying to kick this breathing problem. I get up early that morning to take my medicine. This one, take a puff, wait three minutes, take a puff. Wait five minutes, I'm flying, inhaler A makes me fly, take this one, wait three minutes, puff it again. Wait five minutes, puff this one, puff this one four times, five minutes between each puff. I'm running late, I throw my wallet in my jacket, and my medicine in my pockets because I got to take it again in three hours, and drive across town for my two hour first appointment with this acupuncturist, Dr. Koo. First thing, he looks at me, says why didn't you eat breakfast. I didn't eat any breakfast because I had to take my...he doesn't care. What he means by why didn't you eat any breakfast is don't let it happen again. He takes my pulse, everywhere, says eat more meat. He looks at my tongue and says, too much coffee. This is very impressive, but there's people standing around; I don't want him to say anything else about my habits. I take off my shoes, roll up my pants and lie down. Before he staples me to the table, he explains what he has in mind. He wants to make my lung chee descend. Well, that clears it up for me. He puts in a mess of needles. Then he goes back to each one and he touches it. He's looking for something with this needle. And when he finds it, he knows it and I know it at the same time. I know how I know it, but I don't know how he knows it because he knows it before I make the sound. This is not about pain; this is a noise of amazement. There's a big string runs throughout your whole body, a needle pulls your string, but not only is the string pulled here, the whole rest of the string in the whole rest of your body gets a tug. When all the needles are on the string, we're ready ... to wait. For a couple minutes I just sort of wish I had

something to read, and then I realize that I'm on a magic carpet ride. I'm not on a table, or if I'm on a table, it's not on the ground. I don't know anything about heroin addiction, but I think I know why they can treat it with acupuncture. Dr. Koo pokes his head in and asks me how I'm breathing. I'm breathing fine; I'm full of air. I just don't know how you're going to get me off the ceiling. They unstick me and give me some stuff. Tanquichin to be drunk before bedtime. Peony seeds and licorice bark to be boiled for fifteen minutes and drunk before bedtime, and get some Quinine water on the way home, and have some before I go to bed. I stand at the counter to make my next appointment, words form in my brain but nothing comes out and I can't figure out how to open my calendar book. Brain messages are not reaching my limbs. I'm sitting in the car, might as well take my medicine. Inhaler A, wait three minutes, I'm flying, take it again, wait five minutes, the hell with it. I'm relaxed and I'm flying, it's a good balance. On the way home I pass the second hand store where I buy clothes, and I remember that I need to buy a jacket because I'm going to a place where my current jacket isn't invited. I always try to be green about my driving, so I don't want to waste passing this store. I go in, toss my jacket on the rack, try on a couple of jackets, don't like any of them, and walk out. Wearing one of their jackets by mistake. This is a secondhand store, bells don't go off or anything, but the manager of the store runs out to where I'm trying to find my car keys, and says can I come back inside a minute. For some reason, I think he wants me to take a survey. So I say I don't think so, not right now, because by now I know I shouldn't be doing anything except maybe lying down. He says, you didn't pay for that, ma'am. I hate it when people almost my same age call me ma'am. Pay for what?! Your coat, he says. This is my coat, by which moment I'm looking at the coat and knowing it isn't my

coat. What happened to my coat? I follow the guy back into the store. It's nothing personal, mind you, it's just policy they call the police for all shop lifting cases. This is just a mistake. They nod knowingly, which strikes me very funny and I giggle: which does not improve my status. The police are very stern; This is a big fuss about a 7 dollar jacket. They don't want to take me in. They just want me to pay for the jacket. "I don't like it." Then why did you steal it? I suddenly remember my friend Robert, a seventy-year old world renowned poet, lying in the street in New York City in a diabetic coma, people stepping over him. Robert never knew how to dress like a world renowned poet, he dressed like a bum. I don't dress so great myself, certainly not dressed to make police think I'm law-abiding. They make me empty my pockets. For some reason they're very excited by the peony seeds and licorice bark. Now, they want ID. I reach into the jacket pocket for my wallet, which isn't there because it's in MY jacket. I point and the manager goes and gets my jacket with my wallet in the pocket. They find my 15 dollars in the wallet. I wait for them to put it together that it doesn't make sense to steal a 7 dollar jacket and leave a whole wallet plus 15 dollars behind. Takes them full five minutes; probably because there's three of them. The policewoman sees that this deviant name that I've been telling them is my name IS my name. They take a leap of faith that these things I'm telling them are peony seeds and licorice bark ARE peony seeds and licorice bark. One last check at computer central to make sure I have no outstanding parking tickets, and they let me go, with no apologies. If this is a mistake, it's my mistake not their one.