

Legs

Agnes Lam

I.

Walking into the MTR station
at Admiralty, I felt
my legs moving
down the stairs,
my toes touching
the leather of my two-inch heels.
My legs were carrying me
to the Shenzhen book fair.

These legs have carried me
to Singapore, Malaysia, Japan,
America, Australia, Canada,
so many countries
in Europe,
the Middle East,
all over China.

If I were a tree,
I would have no legs.
I would stay rooted
in one place.
If trees before me were taller,
I would not see the view beyond.
If birds passed their droppings on me
or passers-by snapped off my branches,
picked my flowers,
I could not run.

But I have legs.
I can go
anywhere
I like.

II.

My brother-in-law cannot walk.
My sister and nieces push his wheelchair
up and down
slopes and stairs
in Hong Kong, Thailand, Canada,
parts of Europe,
even Las Vegas.

How do they do it?

Just carrying myself around,
I constantly bump into corners,
get hit by my own luggage –
black and blue patches every month.
Anticipating osteoporosis,
I take calcium every morning,
plan to join a gym.

My sister and nieces
are not much stronger than I –
similar bones and muscles
from similar genes.

How do they do it?

21 November 2004, Hong Kong Productivity Council entrance