

BEIJING AND I MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME

When I first met Beijing, she said,
What're you doing here?
It's not the Olympics yet.

I tried to tell her I was here
to see her country, to get away
from my home, but she tried
to sell me bootleg plushies
of pandas, and I caved in.

When I first met Beijing,
the street was cold
and there was a boy
who had a hole in his pants
where his penis stuck out,
purple and small.

I asked her about that boy
but she said, *I hear*
our mall is the largest in the world –

She gave me a five-star hotel room
with a waterfall in the lobby.
Every time I passed through
that lobby, I thought about the boy.

When I first met Beijing,
all she wanted to do
was practice her English.

I told her I was interested
in writing poems, but
she didn't know
what that was.

I said I wanted to hear
all about her – what she believes
in, where she goes for daily
fun, the names of her friends
and what they hope to become –
but she said there are some things
that shouldn't be talked about.