

“Riding the Elevator into the Sky”
Anne Sexton

Notes

As the fireman said:
Don't book a room over the fifth floor
in any hotel in New York.
They have ladders that will reach further
but no one will climb them. 5
As the New York *Times* said:
The elevator always seeks out
the floor of the fire
and automatically opens
and won't shut. 10
These are the warnings
that you must forget
if you're climbing out of yourself.
If you're going to smash into the sky.

Many times I've gone past 15
the fifth floor,
cranking upward,
but only once
have I gone all the way up.

Sixtieth floor: 20
small plants and swans bending
into their grave.

Floor two hundred;
mountains with the patience of a cat,
silence wearing its sneakers. 25
Floor five hundred:
messages and letters centuries old,
birds to drink,
a kitchen of clouds.

Floor six thousand: 30
the stars,
skeletons on fire,
their arms singing.

a very large key, 35
that opens something-
some useful door-
somewhere-
up there.