(a bit of a radio play. best to imagine this as a journey you take with your mind. it begins abruptly)

VOICE
you can pack the night before. you won’t need very much.

YOU
how long will it take me?

VOICE
you’re a fast packer. 
you pack light. 
this is a good trait. 
you wouldn’t know what to do if you actually needed to pack significant things. 
if home were somewhere deep up in the mountains. 
if you needed more than just sneakers!

YOU
how long does it take to the get to the airport?

VOICE
so much longer than it should. 
but you’ll fall asleep while you’re still on the tarmac and wake sometime around when 
they clear away the beverage service.

PASSENGER
sorry! you missed it!

VOICE
the person next to you will try to talk to you.
you missed the drinks! tried to wake you!

VOICE
someone always does.

PASSENGER
so you a student?

VOICE
but you won’t be in the mood.
you never are.
so ask them about themselves.
that usually works.
people talking to you is usually just a way for them to talk about themselves.

YOU
so what do you do?

PASSENGER
oh well...

VOICE
ey they work as a translator.
they’re in tech.

PASSENGER
i’m a film editor!

YOU
oh wow.

VOICE
it will go on--

PASSENGER
THREE kids!

VOICE
and on--

PASSENGER
you never know what you’ve got till you don’t!

VOICE
and on--
PASSENGER
phlebotomy!

VOICE
one of you—usually them—will run out of material, having heard very little of your biography.

PASSENGER
ah! well. um.

PA SYSTEM
--seats and tray tables in their upright and locked positions--

VOICE
call as soon as you touch down, as soon as it’s deemed okay to make a call. you need this lead time. it will take them half an hour longer than they say it will to pick you up.

PARENT 1
we’re on our way!

PARENT 2
we’re getting in the car now!

VOICE
because they’re your parents, they will give you statements that cannot possibly both be true.

PARENT 1
five minutes!

PARENT 2
(amends) we’re on 19th.

PARENT 1
we’ll be right there. go outside.

PARENT 2
which door are you at?

VOICE
i don’t see you.

PARENT 2
did we tell you? we got a new car.
VOICE
they won’t have told you this.

YOU
why do you have a new car?

PARENT 1
we got a good deal.

PARENT 2
this one has better mileage!

YOU
are you here yet?

PARENT 2
we’re coming.

PARENT 1
we had to go around. they were giving out tickets!

PARENT 2
city’s broke! so what do they do? they give tickets. to make money!

PARENT 1
hey, otherwise, it'll just be people sitting there, waiting, clogging it up!

PARENT 2
it’s gotten so much more crowded!

PARENT 1
which door are you at?

YOU
i’m here. you don’t see me?

PARENT 1
i don’t see you—oh, i see you now.

VOICE
if they do not have food for you in the car already, then they will be amenable to ordering.

PARENT 1
how was your flight?

PARENT 2
you need to clean out your room.

VOICE
your closet. your part of the closet. you no longer have a room.

PARENT 2
i’ll help you. you just need to do it this time.

VOICE
agree to this.

PARENT 2
and there’s some boxes downstairs in the garage. you gotta tell me what you do with those. they’ve just been sitting there.

VOICE
remind them to take the other exit as you’re leaving.

YOU
you’re not going to take the wrong one again, are you?

PARENT 2
oh shoot.

VOICE
even if you miss it, it only adds five, ten minutes at best.

PARENT 2
i always do that. why do i do that?

VOICE
and still get you back to the house in good time. out of the car, the air will feel different. you might not notice it at first. your brother—who will not be in the car, but will be in the house—will say

BROTHER
it reminds me of busan.

VOICE
from the year he lived in korea teaching english.
BROTHER
the air. it smells the same.

VOICE
take the smaller of your luggage.
leave the rest in the car.

PARENT 1
nah, i got it.

VOICE
someone else will get it and bring it up the two flights of stairs.
once inside, put on a sweater.

YOU
it’s so cold in here!

PARENT 2
are you cold?!

VOICE
the difference between this coast and that?
no central heating.
which means it will sometimes be colder inside the house than outside.

YOU
why do we never turn on the heat?!

VOICE
your room is at the top of the stairs, slight right.
it’s an office now.
but they got a sofabed, so you sleep on that.
the bathroom across from the bedroom, that’s yours.
you share it.
you don’t mind this.
text a couple friends to hang out with

PARENT 2
you going out?

YOU
for a bit.

VOICE
but not too many friends.
you won’t be able to see them all in a week.
at home, things move more slowly

YOU
can i borrow the car?

PARENT 1
what?

VOICE
and what’s more, you don’t drive.

PARENT 2
since when did you learn how to drive?

YOU
… kidding.

VOICE
you got a learner’s permit once.
but this has lapsed a couple different times in a couple different states.
and more importantly, your taste has turned from friends to family.

PARENT 2
back already?

VOICE
like a vegetarian turned carnivore,
on this trip, you will only crave blood.
this trip, isn’t it, is all about blood.

PARENT 2
are we ready yet?

PARENT 1
everyone get in the car!

BROTHER
did we get her a present?

YOU
she’s 90 years old. aren’t we the present she wants? isn’t family supposed to be all she
wants at this age?

BROTHER
she wants presents. i made it to ninety, i would want presents. i would want, like, a ton of presents.

PARENT 2
she just wants something thoughtful. to know that you put thought into it.

YOU
so what does she actually want me to do? like i can get her something, i can not get her something.

BROTHER
let’s just all write a card.

PARENT 2
i got it on the counter. use the pen.

VOICE
and when you’re done
when the dinners have been had
when you’ve made a small but sizeable dent in clearing out the closet where they’ve put all your stuff
when you’ve got five garbage bags of things to donate to goodwill
that’s when you come back.

an extended but never quite long enough trip.

YOU
it’s a lot to remember.

VOICE
it is.

YOU
i’m afraid i’m going to forget something.

VOICE
you probably will.
take notes if you need to.

YOU
will it be the same?

VOICE
what do you mean?

YOU
it’s your family.

VOICE
i know that.
(beat) someone should go.
next best option.
you’re going to be great.

YOU
wouldn’t you rather go yourself?

VOICE
of course.
one day.
but until then?

end.