



guest holes

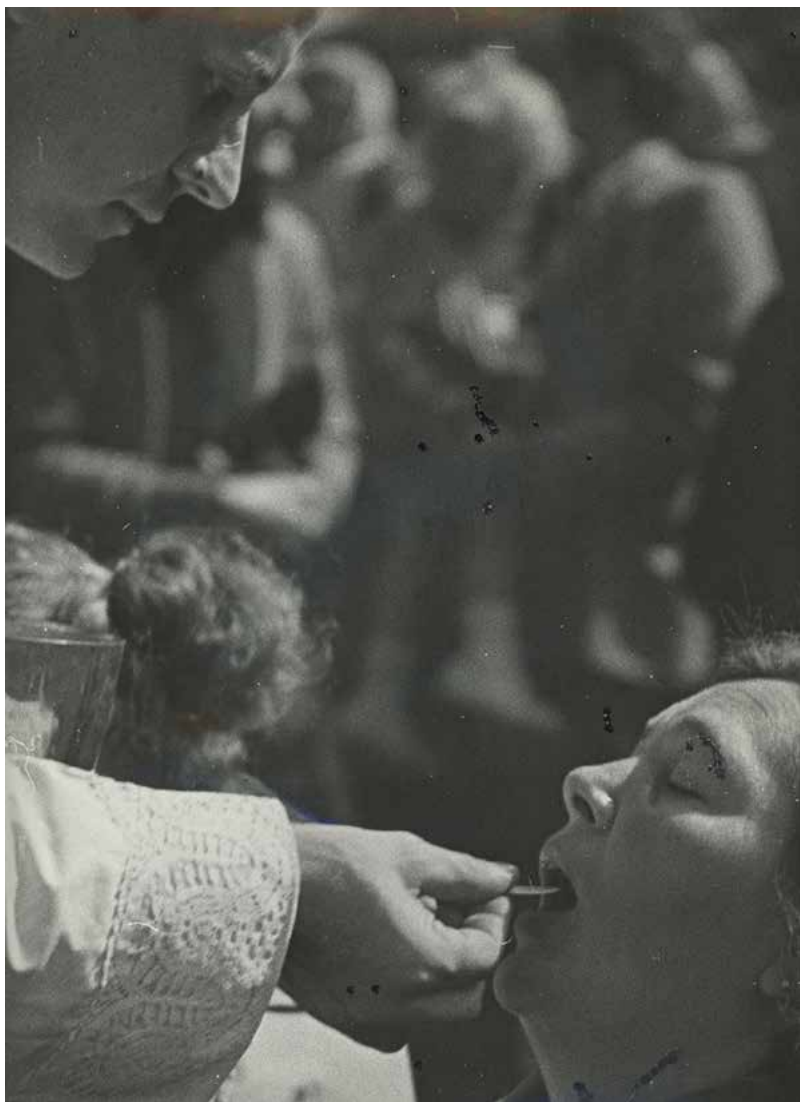
Fiction Group

Sunglasses Architecture – Jessica Wiesner

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I wanna scan you – Adam Kaasa



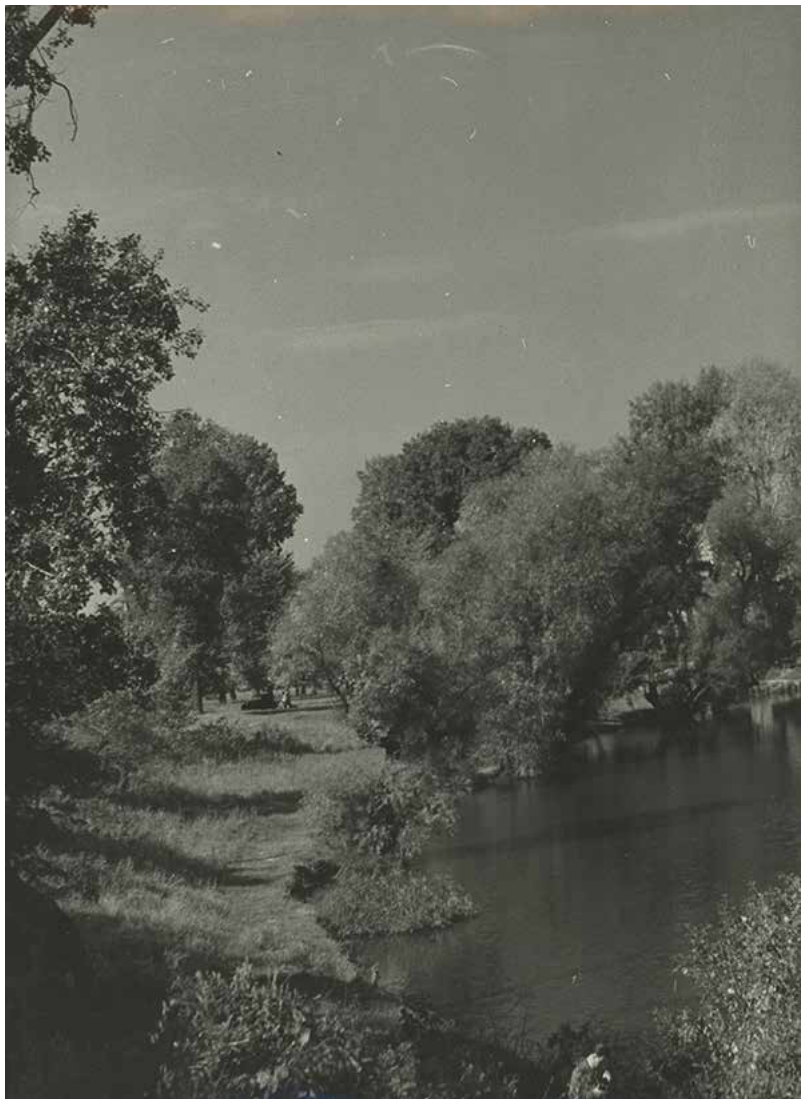












Sunglasses Architecture

Jessica Wiesner

Sunglasses architecture. Sheer drop turrets. A spiral staircase which descends into an unbuilt hole in the ground which is nevertheless constructed. Some sort of technological instrument that produces pure pressure. A building in a hole and the hole unlike the building has not been built but unbuilt, removed from the earth. Topiaries, a carefully constructed nature, also based on removal, like the hole in the ground. Men gathered around a coffin with a ceremonial atmosphere, probably containing the body of another dead man. Two forms in female dress frame an empty space, one is sitting and the other one is standing, both are dancing, both are also waiting. A painting which has been photographed, but still looks very much like it is painted. An old wall next to a new wall, which look old and new respectively, but could have been built at the same time. A head receiving communion. The wafer looks superimposed like it is floating because of its own flatness, who would have guessed it was a whole body. A scene of a river, with a figure who looks as if they are falling out of the frame because they are busy with an object, possibly a camera. It looks like they are being swept away by the curve of the river behind them. Memories, plans, schemes, images, who knows where visions come from.

The hole was big, but not big enough. She surveyed the gash in the landscape through her cat-eye sunglasses, looked down at her foot and kicked a clod of earth.

Nearly there just got the west end to do then job's good

Silence

Been pulling my workers all night to get this deep, they don't love me for it. Smile

More silence

She looked at the horizon. The foreman, her foreman, let out a half-sigh half-laugh, probably reflecting on the joke that love and waged labour could ever be traded seriously.

It needs to be deeper. We haven't hit the seam yet

Now look here

What

Look

At what

Where

Yes where

I

I know

No, I

I know what you are going to say

I don't think you do

Then tell me seriously what you are going to say because if it's

It's important that you see the world as I do otherwise our arrangement doesn't work, and you will leave me no choice but to find a new foreman

She folded her arms, a move that said it was done and so much more. Crooked arms that spoke of contractual precarity, pay checks, future job security, and the uneven inflections of power being wielded, which can only be understood in the fractal moments between things not fully said.

The hole will be deeper

She saw his shoulders heave and he let go of another sigh

That's arranged then put your workers on this today, tonight, however long it takes

But

And yes I understand and I am grateful

As she walked away, she heard the words fucking bitch float past her, but it was done.

Her kitten heels were ruined, and one man had died yesterday in the pit. Why couldn't plans just happen, like in a picture, a landscape where an arrangement of objects in space are processional, orderly, controlled.

Why did that man call you a fucking bitch

She was in a ragtop car and speeding

Don't swear

I didn't

You did

He did

Then you did

But

No buts

Why do you have dirt on your shoes

Because it's 1957 and I can do what I like

You hate having dirt on your shoes so it's not what you like

Okay enough

Can I

No

Can I

No

But you

No

Silence

Sigh

The pit wasn't deep enough

Why do you want a deeper pit

To get at the coal

Why

To extract it and sell it for people to burn we all need fuel

Why do we all need to burn

Silence

I miss grandad

She swerved on to main street

I miss grandad did you hear me

<<if I can offload ten thousand tons in a week we will be in profit and those commodity brokers smart arses will know who's in charge now>>

Yes, I heard you

Do you think someone will dig grandad up in the future, but he will be dirt not grandad and

then someone will burn him?

<<and if can't get the worker to do it round the clock that foreman will have to go>>

Sometimes her desire to make money felt like it wasn't a part of her, that it was a guest, that

had taken up residence and stayed too long, a parasite that lived within her, using her.

Hey

what

Hey, did you hear me I said those funny shaped trees are weird why would you do that to a tree

Topiary

What

It's called topiary I'll get some if you like

I don't like

Don't be rude we can have it if we want it <<why is it so hard to have nice things>>

I don't want it I like trees that are cool that you can climb, and you can't climb those

<<im going to get some of those trees that look like poppoms and lollypops>>

She couldn't wait to drop this ankle-biter off.

As they pulled into her son's drive the passenger door was already lolling open and the bony

legs of her grandchild were swinging out

Bye bye you old bat I love you!

Nice time at the pit son?

Yeah, someone called grandma a fucking bitch and then I got to say fucking bitch and no one could tell me off for saying fucking bitch

<<ineedtocheckoursharepriceandmybondsandthepremiumsonmyloansmypensionislockedinbuti-
fneedtorefinanceimightneedtoborrowagainstthehouse>>

Hi son

Bye son

Soon

Some

Yes

Sun

The beach

Yes

Soon

Soon son the sun

She turned the car around, tyres burning lines in the drive as she sped off.

...

Sunglasses architecture: in this story financial markets are sentient, or if not sentient then actively collaborative, just like wheat which has harnessed humans to help it thrive by killing off its rivals, poisoning its attackers, clearing space for it, tending to it, and turning it into one of the most successful plants on the planet. These sentient markets are reproduced and maintained by finance, which appears as a hidden parasite, hijacking individuals, and humanity to serve and maintain its markets/community. These parasites guide visions, plans, schemes, dreams, and re-form memories like cordyceps' that overtake the nervous systems of ants, driving behaviour from within. Like how gut bacteria makes you crave sugar to feed it, finance makes you do crazy things to serve it. Why do people choose profit over everything else? This story would work up to 1971, when the gold standard was unilaterally abandoned by the US government. It would have finance as an internal voice marked by <<>> and propose fossil fuel as parasitic finance's perfect, insatiable, and combustible buffet.

Guest

Shehnaz Suterwalla

Khay had told me to come to her allotment. She was keen that we meet there, rather than at her home, though the two were hardly far from each other, neighbours of sorts. As I approached I saw her crouching against a verdant low bed scrutinising chard, rubbing it through her fingers as though trying to wipe away a stain. I didn't want to startle her and so called her name from afar, stopping, waiting for her eyes to offer green lights to enter. I didn't know her that well, after all, I'd only met her a handful of times, and not for ages.

Plants are inky things, she wiped her hands on a tea towel tucked into the belt of her apron; kitchen kit that she'd appropriated into her gardening, now stained with chlorophyll green finger prints, childish against her mature elegance, her natural refinement. What time is it? She asked first, then leaned to kiss me on both cheeks. Welcome, she smiled.

Khay told me that she came everyday to the allotment despite the weather, in spite of it mostly, ready to parachute covers over seedling shoots, cool beds with a gentle mist, prune the viney night jasmine. She liked to pop one or two of the flowers into hot water, drink the infusion with oven roasted salted almonds.

Thank you for inviting me here. I meant it, as I stood sincerely but awkwardly, watching her pour tea from a thermos. She's planned ahead for me. Now that I have my garden, this is where I am to be found. She was not shy to admit the fact.

The tea was scorching and sweet, the milk in Khay's eyes fresh. I really appreciate your help, there are so many documents, so many photographs, there is no way that I can make sense of it all on my own, she smiled warmly. She appeared capable with her straight back, her balletic poise, but I believed her.

Yet I was somewhat bewildered at the invitation nonetheless. Khay's documents and photographs were not here, not indexed among the plants, not tucked among the foliage, why did she want us to meet in this spot? Gardens give a sense of possibility, don't you think, Khay said as a statement rather than a question. I didn't utter much in reply, ruminating the suggestion under the ruddy sun. I supposed that you could perch anywhere to imagine drama. Move your fabrications to an edge, take a risk in your mind by nudging to a precipice of wonder. I stared at Khay as she crushed some eggshells into the soil, calcium for her marigolds. My mother's garden was mostly flat, Khay said, not huge. But it was hers, the place where I slashed my ankles and tore my skin among the thorns of damask and pink lavender roses. Where I pressed the print of my thumb into her olive, pomegranate, cedar, acacia, sturdy oak, almond, orange, myrtles.

I stared at Khay's papery but flawless hands, I can still feel exactly how they burned, she added, better than any memory.

For a moment I tried to think of a place that is beyond memory, perhaps this was how you picture other people's stories on their own terms. Khay came from a place I could never know, not from the inside, not its prismatic truth. Here look at these – she beckoned me to get closer – I am growing thyme, lots of it. I will pick some for later. The poetic justice of the perennial evergreen among the molten glow of the bangle orbiting Khay's wrist made me feel as though I never wanted to leave this place.

We both drank our tea, Khay continued to potter, sifting soil through her fingers, crawling her hands through its silt as though searching for an underneath. She was new to this plot, something of a guest still, she seemed keen to make a claim on it. Meanwhile I wondered whose decomposed bones she might be handling in the sedimented mix. I picked up a metallic smell in the air but said nothing. Khay was not young and she struggled to get back onto feet. For a few moments she moved differently, dragging herself, waiting for her joints to release after crouching. The sun shifted. What do we inherit when we are left with nothing, I thought

watching her. Perhaps just pains in the body.

I admired Khay's fortitude to grow new things; the bother of it. The hope within it, or perhaps that was stretching things too far. Some soil is impenetrable, as we know. Nothing can grow, absolutely nothing. Land becomes the enemy. Harsh terrain, rocky quarries, knife edge cliffs. At other times, when terrain is fertile, enemies become the land; checkpoints, guards, walls, eradicated villages, documents needed to enter your front door; land as conditional to who you are, who you are seen as being. And when your land, that of your birth, that of your ancestors, metastasises into the inhospitable, malignantly turns against you to reject you, you can no longer see trees. All that becomes visible then are wolves.

Khay promised to show me a map. It is with the other documents, she said, you will see. It is my grandfather's, I know this because it has the heavy weight of his fountain pen signature on the back, and the date that he bought it, a date from an otherwise time, when the pink lines that veined across the continent pulsed in directions we once could call a homeland. Lands that throbbed with our presence and contained us, tended to us, held us.

Homeland is like a caul, embodied elsewhere in and of another time. A complete time. When punctured, any make-shift sense of home can never contain again, nor carry the weight of its people, the leadenness of their scars. The sun sees it all, of course, the shifting, morphing, moving, migrating, searching; but its rays can never warm another space. Instead a new idea of home must be built but this can only teeter on the cold ledge of a rockface. Cornered, precarious on destitute limestone, it is nonetheless a phare for those who are lost.

Khay's documents are thin membranes in old dusty boxes. They line the front room of her apartment, personal archives as installations, performative acts of the peripatetic. The documents speak back to all that gets stolen. The photographs reject dispossession. When we enter after having spent a good two hours in the garden, I struggle to adjust my eyes to the darkness, I catch shadows. What is a good time to turn on the lights? Khay asked. I don't understand early springs.

As I started to leaf through her collection she warned, be careful with those. Years before Khay had grabbed the letters, the parchment – inscribed notes in old hands – the photographs in a desperate moment of grief and panic. She had taken all that she could simply for the strange relief to make sure she left nothing behind. For rams with horns were barraging the front door. Let there be no trace of us here, she had thought, just the whispers of barren ghosts. Women can be wreckers, too. Architects of imperial dissent. In my hands Khay's materials of her extraordinary, of her mundane felt hot to the touch, as though organically alive, sprouting, birthing, though they'd been locked in a storage room with barely any air. Yet each was a papilla from which I believed feathers could grow. Stories need to be carried, to fly; airborne, they don't need land. It's the best we can do given the circumstances – and now I was implicated in their journey. The creases on letters the indelible record of a family line. Ossified memories rigid in photos, unbending. Each print a palimpsest of the hands that cared for it in unknown places, keeping things moving, breath resuscitating reparative life into them, unburying them. These lavish traces spidered through the boxes in Khay's simple, modest flat, her second-class living room created on a precipice: a crag where she had no option but to always be a guest, beholden to mercurial hosts who could decide at any point that her fate was to forever skim the thin ice of the periphery.

That's me as a young girl, Khay held up a family photo. In it her hands gesticulate in another language to any that I could understand, her mouth speaks with unfamiliar sounds, her tongue rolls. There are flowers around her, buttery yellow. And mountains, too. Is rock more resilient than the petal? Or is it that rocks and cliffs and mountains are the fortresses that never allow the immigrant heart to wilt? The conditional hospitality of strange weather beating against them, smashing rain bruising their body, no matter, flowers might still grow. But can anything beautiful really ever bloom in wounded soil?

Or is it just pity that spawns?

My father often took photos of us, Khay said as she passed me a box and with the nod of her head encouraged me to open it and look inside. Here are the ones I particularly like to listen to, she offered. Every time I see my mother's face I hear her peeling laugh and her resolute refusal to be quiet. I know exactly what is beyond each of the frames that can't be seen, what happened at the sharp edges that nonetheless played a part in determining the image: the jostle of soldiers circling the edges of our vegetable patch, the odd horn of a car that would pass, the quiet hum of the kitchen.

There are as many untaken photographs, cobwebby placeholders in the archives that wait for someone to blow the dust off them, to weave something from them, to fill in the gaps.

Look at this one, Khay continued. My mother is standing in front of a pudding she had made for my brother's birthday, she knew how to smile for the camera. Earlier that day the hot chamber of a kalashnikov had been rubbed up against her, pushed between her legs as she had walked to the market to buy a small piece of lamb. She was to slow cook it for dinner, with sumac, with cinnamon, some ground cardamom and cloves. On her return she had first retreated to her bedroom to change, to get rid of the stink of steel from the violating appendage, throw its abject stench into the washing pile, turn her back on it all. She'd put on a freshly ironed shirt, a crisp apron, cheerily she had begun to chat to us about school while grabbing a knife to dice onions. Later in the evening she had recited a folk poem for good fortune, I remember the cadence, her lilt, even, measured. Different to the deep dark timbre that cut 'no' as she pushed past teenage soldiers who tried to pull our hair, just because they could. She would shove them away as she enveloped us into the folds of her skirt.

Her skirts, large and cave-like. Cauls; and elsewhere within them we celebrated and rejoiced in rapture.

Elsewhere it is always another time, beyond any technology of capture, a time for unlearning; here the hillsides remain sunny for picnics, the cedars abundant, the honeysuckle blossoms. Khay loved to pick these as a young girl while walking and hiking and climbing, and after, once coolness had descended, she would sit in the quiet hum of the kitchen and press them for posterity.

Standing there | with | just their | eyelashes for | protection¹

Nicky Coutts

Boungy (underlined in wavy red)

Smother (corrected from smather underlined in wavy red)

An unusual word meaning (to press in threateningly...) not underlined as it is a real word.

I am with so much. With heat under my elbows. With a panel of tree middles framed by the round cornered train windows. With flies inexplicably buzzing between the double glazing. With withness: the ability to be here and now with and without the possibility of being anyway else. With the smell of tea, sweat, burning off fuel, commercial detergent, armpit, hair gel, sprihnk, pnuchimx, vehplfre and spmmmggh. With a constant background that is following me around and changing everywhere I go. Being away is producing new withs. 'Withs' that are changed to 'witches' by autocorrection underlined in wavy red.

I'm with just the right amount of it to never think of air. With just enough to feel, too much most often.

With just you often and that's more than enough and I don't notice that 'enough' as I don't need to think of air. 'With' and 'just' can flatten each other. The 'with' so very thin. The 'just' measuring its thinness. Sometimes the 'just' takes over from the 'with' and I find myself held in thinly. I feel the weight of blood column within my skin.

Just their luck to die between the window panes. Just their style to do so upside down with their legs bent inwards towards their abdomens, immediately dust, alien for their lack of need to ever think of air. What is just theirs closes off. Is a snapped off signal extending invisibly from their bent legs. It is just their claim, falling out from the air when they die, the oxygen that they don't use held between their dead legs. Their materials held as just theirs.

Eyelashes for keeping her eyes clear of dust, stares, blows and missiles. Eyelashes for flicking wide, hanging half arc, for remembering all the hair loss from closer to ape days. Eyelashes for filtering what she wants to see, for veiling and softening, for choice of what and how much she sees. Eyelashes for black, rich black. Eyelashes for lassoing whoever she wants, hauling them in as she pulls herself in hand over hand, in and out of danger.

Protection from them. From them that weren't 'them' until they decided to be so. For protection from them before they decided, before it was decided in their minds by former decided minds. She lashes them with her eyes. She stands with only her eyelashes.

'Eyelashes' appear nine times in Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake*.

'...those extravagant eyelashes that curl back to the lid, the uncovered wounds, that bit of paper on her lip, and a leaf on the gown and in her hair. "standing here in **eyelashes**, in/.../ the brittle gnawed life we live,/ I am held, and held." p.120

I marked her youth, the scar on the bridge of her nose that seems to continue through one eyebrow, her eyes and **eyelashes**, the uncovered wounds, a bit of paper, and a leaf. p.45

One pulls back so that the other details I described become visible: the gown, the leaf, those big brown eyes with their impossibly long **eyelashes** and an uncovered wound under the right one, the stretcher and the cold pack. p.48

Let me declare doorways,
corners, pursuit, let me say
standing here in **eyelashes**, in
invisible breasts, in the shrinking lake
in the tiny shops of untrue recollections,
the brittle gnawed life we live,

¹ A misremembered quote from Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake*

I am held, and held
—Dionne Brand, *Thirsty*. p.68

With that first poem of *Thirsty* one cannot not think of the ways
we, Black people in diaspora, are held and held in and by the “brittle
gnawed life we live,” unprotected from the terrible except by **eyelashes**. p.68

The holds multiply. And so does resistance to them, the
survival of them: “the brittle gnawed life we live, /I am held, and held.”
We understand this because we are “standing here in **eyelashes**.” p.73

Her big black eyes, with their lush **eyelashes**, look glazed. p.118

Delia and Drana sitting there (still) and then standing there (still), and clothed and unclothed (still) and protected only
by **eyelashes** (still). p.118

I wanna scan you

Adam Kaasa

It happened again. You woke up reciting the words

I thought you were leverything but lnothing lhurt me lmore than lthat lthought

The room was blue. A blue you'd never have thought possible, but there it was, looking back at you. Blue blue blue. Blue like that book Jessica got you for your sixth birthday. Blue like that hat you lost hiking the summer mom died. Blue like the 90s song that's coming back again cause everything old, right? But the words. I can't tell you how often I hear it come out of your mouth. Sure the words, but the cadence is different each time, like a scanner scanning for some root rhythm. I read once that to scan is to look. But Chantal told me it's also the anus. And the etymology dictionary told me it was about rhythm, about looking for the stresses, for the punctuated highs and lows of articulable speech. Sometimes I want to scan you, so I can pack you away somewhere forever, in some harddrive. Or print you out in that time from now when I know I'll miss you. I want to scan you like some important document in the upstairs office of too many suburban homes where these oculi sit dusty and cold for the three times they're used – passport, deed, ass. Have you ever scanned your ass? You don't know what flat is until it's scanned. I want to scan you like an anus projects from the inside out, on some cold day when plans are broken, and it rains regret in a rhythm we're used to. I want to scan you for meaning, for stress and meaning. Are you iambic? Dactylic? Could the scan help me say you differently? Say us differently? If I read you like some old poem, would it mean something code-like and subtle? Are we subtle? Are we tacit?

I don't know, but you just woke up again reciting the words

Il thought lyou were everything but nothing lhurt lme lmore than that lthought

It was fourteen years ago, you had changed your name by then, and even then I liked it more than whatever you were called before. Mom was upstairs listening to the rock album she played when nothing was going the way the day needed it to and so for a few minutes it was like we were all in a stadium, a mosh pit, anything went, everything went – you and I singing along, fearful for it to end. I think that's when we learned how to do calibrated and coordinated repetitions on the record player. I would artificially lower the volume as if the song was ending and you would flick the needle back within the same song, and I'd raise the volume again. For a heartbeat, a glitch was heard, but the fade in and out meant that the glitch was like getting confused whether it was two or three kisses on the cheek and laughing about it anyways afterwards. The song didn't need to end then. It was an in and out loop, one of those twisted rubber bracelets you got from auntie O. where the inside became outside became inside again. Something like that was the feeling those days at home with mom. A single loop, never knowing if you were out or in, continuous. Maybe we don't notice repetition in such twisted loops. The continuity betrays novelty.

I'm no longer sad that you're here, but I can't tell if you feel the same way. You just look at me and say

I thought lyou lwere leverylthing but lnothing lhurt me lmore than that lthought

I hear you, but am sitting at the piano, and so am turned a bit away from where you are resting, if that's indeed what you're doing. It's the before and after that is sadness. The when you're in it is somehow more logistical, slow, long, lingering. The days aren't the same, there's always something new, something changed, something advanced in some way. These days when change is the rule, even stillness feels like movement. Chords too have their own sense of movement, momentum, feeling and emotion. A turn from one to another can cause a feeling of this or that. You taught me that within every chord change is

the whisper of what's possible next. If I play a C chord, what follows could be quite literally anything, but some will feel more possible or likely than others. If I play a C and then an Am7, again, technically anything can come next, but something will probably come next. The more you would play the more and more you would tell me how you tried to resist playing what was expected next. It's the rules of a listener's expectation that begin to constrain the sense of infinite possibility, and return us to infinite repetition. I try now to make the room change colour through sound, to play a series of chords that you don't expect so that the unexpected returns as a possibility, but the more and more and more I play, the less and less and less I can continue to escape expectation. It's the blue that sticks.

You were sitting there murmuring the words over and over, like spring slush mixed with the grit and sand of a long winter

I thought you were everything but nothing hurt me more than that thought

I couldn't tell if you were fully awake but I brought the pictures again to show you. The ones we developed from that roll of film we found cleaning out mom's studio. I remember we debated the ethics of what happens when someone dies and all their stuff is there staring at you, asking of you, hiding from you. What was so familiar because its strangeness was blurred by the familiarity of a body we knew so well, becomes just strange without an interpreter, a storyteller, a medium. I don't think mom ever told us not to read or look at things, but when someone is dead, and you know that they are, but you feel like they might be just out for a walk, or maybe on the toilet, or maybe forgot something upstairs and they're about to come down to tell you about this picture you have in your hand, how can you not look? I remember picking up the pictures, along with the scans on CD so we could keep and share them on our computers in our different cities, print them off in those kitsch memory books you can order online. I think we were both surprised that any photos came back from a roll of film from what seemed so long ago. We looked at them together trying to read her into them and read them out of her, but as we flipped through it was like a strange sequence of chords. What we thought might be a major 7th was followed by a diminished 6th, and then a I, and then a V. We didn't know these places, or these people, but I guess we knew that she pushed the button to open the eye (the anus!) and snap these shots and that something of that body being somewhere was something to hold onto. You and I here, sitting in the 'as if' of a view she once viewed. I flip through them now for you like on a loop, 12 photos, again and again, so they start to make a kind of sense, they start to make a kind of rhythm, they start to make a familiar sound.

I get up to turn off the light. It's late, and you're tired. The words slow down, the breath heavy. I know you mean them about mom, but I feel you say them to me, and I've heard them so much I feel I say them about you too. I love you, I'd say, bend down and give you and your too thin body a hug. I love you too, you'd say.