

Filename: Whereof one cannot speak, one must feel

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I have felt homeless for many years, in the broadest sense. When I was seventeen, I ran away from my mother's home and moved to my father's until I graduated school a year later. Those wounds still haven't healed; my mother feels it, too. Sometimes, when I look at her, I can see it reflected in her clear eyes and in the lines around her mouth. I can feel her broken heart, a twin of my own, pounding through my chest. My mother lives in me, and it eats me from the inside out.

I smell her perfume on a stranger on the train, and there it is, another one of those moments, those wondrous keyframes. Just the trace of scent, a fragment of a second that splits my body from my mind. It transports me back, through time and space, to the days of my childhood. My mother, honey hair in an updo, her well-worn beige coat wrapping around her like a second skin, spreads her arms, and I run into her embrace,

inhaling her scent as I reach her. Lemon, flowers, home. Behind us, my teacher waves goodbye. *See you tomorrow.* It's another spring day in 2011.

The streets in the town I now live in have the same eclectic look of those in trendy districts of big cities. Thin trees to every side that turn them into lush avenues each summer. Colorful facades, blue, yellow and red, with big windows and graffiti-smearred doors. Cobblestones. Secondhand shops and vegan cafes. I still feel out of place sometimes.

As I walk, the wind and the light change, even though the sky is clear. Maybe it's just a synapsis in my brain that snapped. The city looks different now, familiar and eerily strange at the same time. The angle from which I normally look up at the tall fronts is not quite right. It's distorted. A blurry negative of reality, vibrating on another frequency. Why do I suddenly move so differently? I'm a

stranger in an unknown city, seeing the bright townhouses with their whimsy windows and doors for the first time. There is a taste of adventure in the air.

Somewhere in a tiny backroom of my brain, a memory stirs and wakes. I'm twelve and full of an indistinct yearning for faraway places. The houses in my hometown look like those in England. Like the England I imagine while reading books about magical schools. I'm twelve, and books are my home.

You sit on my kitchen counter, a cigarette in one hand and a half-empty soda can in the other. Sugar-free, naturally. The room is too small for a table and chairs, so we crouch uncomfortably next to the sink. We watch TikTok on your phone; you don't scroll at the clip that says: "°*, ask your friends which kind of sky you are.*°" I snort at it, but I secretly hope you say I'm the golden sky.

"You're definitely the fourth," you say. Ah. The golden sky. I play it cool. I must stop my heart from beating so fast. It is a stupid video and a stupid little sentence, casually said without deeper meaning. Silly hope washes over me and I feel foolish. I want

to look at you and ask *Do you see me?* (*Can you grasp my essence?* No one has ever done that before.)

You don't know that I categorize those in-between moments, those glimpses of the past, in a nameless file in my mind. Nameless because I can't possibly shape the feeling into words. Every time I think I have found a way to describe it, it slips away. The feeling is abstract, but the same for all those moments, nonetheless. The closest I have come to describing it is associating it with golden skies. I think I might be heliophilous. Each tiny moment, a little snippet cut out from the endless amber sky.

What am I, if not patches of my past?

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