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TRANSMISSION

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There is something wrong with the television screen above the bar. Hazy and grained, out of colour, it bleeds in a dream-like sequence of events; a dream-state, much like the dream recordings from the Wim Wenders film *Until the End of the World*. Is this the news, or the television telling me something that has long happened, buried in my hopeless memory? Like a file corrupted, unable to open properly due to age or some kind of damage; corrupted perhaps due to the incompatibility between systems. I was five years old; I remember a man. There is a man on the television. This is only my second drink. Are you receiving me?

How does the song go? Under the weather, where we all are. Nobody else seems to notice this. Lately I've been struggling to remember the things that no longer access the way I expect. A box in storage in an attic I return to, toys or files, fully intact, and still there for the taking, or asking. Are you receiving me? On Sunday I went to visit my mother in hospital, nearing the end of a two week run in ICU. Every time she gets a cold she gets pneumonia, a hammer her body down, immune system shot; she up in bed on a crossword, picking words and names out of a hat, falling asleep where she sits. She nods and she nods, thinking. Half asleep or awake. I ask her, what was the name of dad's aunt, the one who did the family history? I feel awful that I haven't been able to remember it, that it isn't there anymore, an empty shoe box that wasn't supposed to. What was her name?

I remember my sister at the edge of my old aunt's nursing home bed only two months old, on the day we introduced them. I was six, and apparently big enough to get up on the bed by myself, but too big to crawl around. I don't know, my mother answers, surprised. Where did it go? I feel like something has been stolen from us, that neither of us know how to properly retrieve. Who keeps track of the family history? There is very little insurance on a lost or stolen memory, left on its own at your singular risk.

I have a series of recurring dreams, but they always fade by morning. Are you receiving me?

The waitress has a laugh that could cut glass; hearty, sharp. Her red hair fires megaphone behind, lines of shampooed exhaust, trailing behind as she moves. Is this detail at all important? Every man in here in love with her and a few women

too. Is this important? Are you receiving me? I don't need to know anything about the inner workings of the telephone to be able to call; twist a key and the car just goes. This is all the information, I tell myself, I need. There is flesh on a series of bones, what the fingers continually need. I set the tips against mathematics, a series of symbols at the payphone downstairs, pay only a quarter. Are you receiving me?

Lately, it takes me almost forever to fall asleep at night. My body so tense, getting up a couple of times for real or imagined noises, a scrape in the driveway through the air conditioner, or mice in the kitchen dipping through the garbage. I never used to be this tense; what happened? And now when I wake up in the morning, all my thoughts already immersed in the what-ifs and the could've-beens, reliving every failure and disappointment. No longer tense but its polar opposite; hopelessly inert.

Lately I've been caught up with the rain as a kind of cleansing ritual, the smell and the sound of hard, hard rain bouncing off pavement and rolling off smooth against the hill. There is a smell that comes before sound, and a sound that comes before taste, before sight. There is something cool against the skin, though not necessarily cold. I could spend a morning or an afternoon a sponge, absorbing from my dry alcove. Are you receiving me?