

A Brief Elegy for the Things I Don't Talk About

I sit in an empty apartment alone, waiting for someone, *anyone*, to stop by and say hello. All of my roommates are gone. They took their furniture with them when the university shut down. Outside my bedroom, it's all skeleton, save for the green velvet couch and the rice cooker one of my roommates left me. I go out to the kitchen for a glass of water. Maybe I should just go to bed. In the kitchen, I can't hear the exodus of the city below. The faucet is dripping and will never stop dripping. The lights are burned out, but what's the point in changing them now?

I return to my room and the drone of cars below cuts through *For Reverend Green*. Tonight it is sixty degrees and I am sitting on the floor listening to a record that a friend back home sent. It doesn't dull the street sounds carrying in through the open windows. Everyone is leaving or is already gone. Shouldn't it be silent? Maybe they are just angry.

I sit across from the bookshelf my father built and stare at the bottom shelf: Kundera, Didion, Dombek, Murakami, Febos, Shonagon. The books are a shrine to the machine that taught me how to write.

The embodiment of writing. It soaked up each moment it could, collecting each moment as experience. It was a machine. The input was the empirical world, the output was an essay. A mind-blowing, pain inducing, deep, dark, hidden fear evoking essay. I think about the type of writer I want to be, and I only hope to be half as articulate and understanding as it. Its words could cut through my skin and had the control to transport me to any world it wanted me to be in. I am yet to find a writer that I like more.

I want to know if it remembers when we sat outside its apartment, the apartment with the peeling yellow wallpaper, and smoked until one in the morning. It was November and we talked about Eliot Weinberger. There was something in the way it stood for hours as I sat on the curb. Something about it—

When I remember it tonight, I think about how kind it was. It would sit across from me at its kitchen table for hours. We'd work through a single sentence, passing papers back and forth, trying to get the moment just right. It never offered an irritated word or complaint. Once during the sixth revision of an essay, I told it that *I didn't know what to do and it didn't matter anyway*

because why would it. And its response still rings in my ears today: *well it's not like you don't have a choice, because you do—you can either write or kill yourself.* It was abrasive, but it was kind. It was everything I needed in the moment. It was everything I needed. Maybe it was restrained frustration. Either way, it was endearing.

Endearing. It's a simple word that's tinged for me.

I will continue to remember its openness. It was confidently scared of its own emotions. Or at least, it wasn't ashamed of them. It accepted them, unapologetically, and let them breathe, let them fester. I hope to write with this same intensity. It taught me that when what you are writing makes you uncomfortable, makes your stomach turn and your eyes narrow, that's when you are on to something good. And this wasn't weird, this was perfect. It wasn't weird when I would cry when writing. And it wasn't weird when it said that it wished we were the same age. But it is weird as I write this line.

Was it weird when it told me that things would be different if we had met at some other time, in some other context? Maybe it was, but I think I just liked it. I liked it. Of course I liked it.

I stare at a white wall until screeching tires pull me back into the room, back into the bookshelf. I don't talk about it to anyone. I don't share how I felt or how I thought I should feel. My thoughts of it can only come at designated times. I don't want it to show up unannounced; only in the right space is it welcome to come back to me.

For all I know, it's dead, but I can still feel its writing sucking the air from my lungs as I sit in my empty apartment, not wanting *anyone* to stop by and say hello.