



Dear Architecture,

“This city is beauty/unbreakable and amorous as eyelids,” Dionne said about you, Toronto, home now to my shadow heart. I’m in Paris, in a lonely room overlooking a cement court, where a man in torn buckskins has built himself a cardboard chateau. All night he writes mouth letters to his lover, who is beached in a bomb-dried town. My intimates drawer is full of unstamped posts. The city of my longing has too many addresses.

i.
The corridor from Kensington Ave to Cold Tea. We went there late at night, and ate dim sum, and danced to dub with a girl whose bones were concrete poetry. I don’t pine for the burning dance-floor, or the summer pleasure of soju on the tongue, but for that corridor, passage from the observable street to the private interior.

ii.
The reflecting pool under Roy Thompson Hall. You were leaving me, or you weren’t, or I was leaving you, or I wasn’t. In a water-body like this, with its even tile, a cuttlefish could circle forever.

iii.
Crossways Clinic, shame so man-sized it bent my back. Among the 1980s ochre inlay, grouting formed troughs for lost soil to pass through. The day died as soon as I stepped inside, and then I had to walk by Nueva Vida’s rows of unreadable books. I bought a chicken sandwich. I don’t eat chicken. By the time the nurse touched my neck I was in tears, and I fell into her starched white, and despite the grief of that grey Friday, I sometimes feel homesick for the hermitage of her arms.

iv.
The Music Gallery, timpani aching into the joints of that old church. It was storming outside—a child in rain-boots; a man in a translucent trench. Earlier that day you had sliced your hand open on a red brick, and the rain stung your nerves before it froze them. Your head on my jacket, I took care. And the sound mounted, and your palm pulsed, until the chamber held the spirit of every space: concert hall and hospital and church and home. A memory palace I have stalked barefoot for years.

v.
The Mies pavilion, checkered above by fluorescence, casting jalousie patterns onto your cheeks. The yellow flowers, upright in their fishbowls. The flags, the Christmas trees in spring. I said, “Let’s not sleep alone tonight,” and you nodded my panic away. This is where my nostalgia lives: not in all the glass and light of that giant pavilion, but in the tapered vases on each desk, in those flowers’ sunglow-yellow gestures of yes.

The space of the city. The object of the heart.
Come live in the cardboard under my window.
It has no view. There, we can be endless. You can be mine, and I can be
Yours,
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