

I Have to Remind Myself, 2019

Sh-sh-sh, my grandfather's navy colored slippers silence us as he schleps around his yellow kitchen. This evening he reminisces about the times he would bring my brother and me to our neighborhood park on clear days and catch us when we plummeted down cool, steel slides. Snot begins to dangle from his nostrils as he is bent over his compact sink. I reach for his floral dishes and pick up his worn-out sponge, but he shakes his head, chuckles, and flicks his wrist. I sit down.

Weeks before, my mother phoned him to inquire about how he is feeling, and he said, "It's not the weather, it's me."

And she voices that again to remind me,
to remind herself.

Today I reflect on people who hold bookmarks beneath sentences on pages, about those who allow their fingers to prance as they listen to music through their chunky headphones. I wonder about this woman next to me, whose head is being swallowed by the hood of her heavy coat and the grizzled man humming in his wheelchair. Above me is an advertisement for Sustainable Happiness.
<I question what that means.>

My mother is sleeping beside me and sometimes she wakes up and calls out to her mother; my grandmother. I listen to her breathing, listen to the sound of cars zooming on damp streets outside. I listen to my own breath as I inhale, wheezy and faint. I miss someone who has become a stranger, and miss someone who claims to not be one. I think of home and find that home is wherever my mother and grandfather are. I think of the things that I may never write and the things that I should have said. I think about mama telling me that I get in the way of my happiness a lot. Why? What is wrong with me? Who will ever tolerate my thoughts and ideas? Who am I? Can an artist who is a woman suffice? I close my eyes and dive into a light sleep and dream about people I have uttered few words to and about faces I have studied in crowds. I miss _____ and _____ and _____, but I am terrible at showing it, and can only tell them.