

Ever After

At the office, I tried to take off
my ears & hand them back to the white
palms. They no longer fit. Notes from the doctor's teeth:
a new pair would be "very expensive," but to "think about it."
"90% of people like you get them." The sound of a smile
emerged from his muzzle like a glass
slipper sliding through wet mud. Smearred footprints
spread into a dainty arc. I wondered if I should teach him
about conditional probabilities. Who knew destiny could be
so damn expensive. I said he could take mine
for free, I didn't want anything,
really, all I ever asked
was to sleep in silence, but he left the door
ajar & I didn't
want to cause a scene. I could hear
the eyes in the waiting room, unblinking
clicks of a loaded clock. I cricked my ears
counterclockwise & they resumed
screaming. I tapped them for consolation.

I tapped the sky for good luck. It was still white.
Still made of glass. I pressed my palms against the mist
ceiling, bargained my fingerprints, my sparkling
purity for the right to remain
silent, which promptly
expired on the ride home. My ears sang along
with all the wrong consonants. Missed
offbeats. *Coffee* became *calm*
me, thinking concocted *sinking, ignorance* begot
innocence, destiny
the *death of me*, on & on.

At home, I shut the piano. Unfastened
my fingers. My ears throbbed as if stifling
secrets. I played the red
mahogany, over & over. My brain
sang to itself. In the variations
of emptiness, wrong
notes echoed like falling
glass in an impossible vacuum. My hands
still open, still mine.



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