
ANYA SILVER

National Radio Quiet Zone

Green Bank, West Virginia

Here there are no Crystals, Chimes, or Twinkles.
No Bamboo, Chords, Popcorn, or Synth.
No ringtones at all. No blinking apps.

Only landlines, with their quaint, curled cords,
interrupt the day's work and the evening's rap
of tableware, the glide of a finger along a page.

Imagine the muting of digital clamor—
hearing, instead, the cracks, barks, and snaps
of the half-hidden world, the movement of things.

To pay more attention to the clicking of water
in a shower, the swish of a brush through hair,
the velvet give of yogurt when stirred with a spoon.

Quiet draws me deeply—it's why
I go slack in a lake with my ears underwater
or attend to the slow unwinding of cicada song.

I want silence to gather me into itself,
for stars and love to move in closer,
to unwrap my voice and hear it clearly, at last.

How to Tie a Chemo Scarf

Close the door and stand before a mirror.
Cup your face in your hands,
nesting your cheeks in your palms.
Admire the shape of your skull.
It vessels whatever you are.

Somewhere in your brain, memories
stir, flowing to the foreground.
All your humors are cranial.

Your hair rarely looked the way you liked it,
but remember its best days:
when a stylist sprayed the long strands
around soda can-size rollers,
then back-combed a bouffant.
Feel your curls soften and glide,
dark shine between oiled fingers.

Realize that, as an object of desire,
you will walk invisibly mile after mile.
Yet, wherever you go, people will gawk
at you without pity, just curiosity.

Or worse, with pity.

When you feel alone, line your lips bloody.
Clip the chunkiest hoops to your lobes.

Death, what of it? It was always there.
Your gaze is just sharper now.

If you want to curse, curse.
Then picture a split-open geode,
its quartz exposed and radiant.

Now, pick up your scarf.

Disappearances

When a voice stops talking, it simply stops.
Once the room was full, every chair occupied.
No matter how late I stayed up,
another woman somewhere was cleaning her kitchen.
Even when they disappeared one by one,
their last messages innocuous, unaware
that they were the last, I remained in the room.

I tried to seal it off, once,
like my husband tried to cap the chimney.
But the birds keep tumbling down the bricks.
The last one hadn't even grown feathers, still fetal.
Just so, I let one last woman in.
For a year, we talked to each other
and forgot the time, forgot its relentless leak.
One morning, I tried to write her, but she had suddenly died.

With every death, the room I sit in empties.
The curtains, the rug, the lamp, the love seat.
Now it's just me in my favorite chair,
with no one to talk to. I wait
for the force that will pull me from the chair,
for the room's blankness to draw me under.