

Patient SJ

[illegible]

I could not escape the August wind last year,

it would not stop whispering in my left ear

and in the still, the only sound I could hear

sh

Hope said *it's an echo its fate is to fade,*

while kettle hiss and Sunday hymns receded away.

The audiologist squeezed me into his schedule

and into a booth to listen for beep boops

[illegible]

beep beep

boop

beep boop

Ready for results, the audiologist led

me out the door, his thin lips fast-moving said

[illegible]

Go

see

your

 GP

My doctor of twenty years spared twenty minutes for me—

our game of twenty questions ended with advice from Dr G.

[illegible]

Chewing gum should help

Will that unstick this noise?

shushushushushushushushushushushushushushushush

Can't be sure unless sinus scan

Will that be this week?

shushushushushushushushushushushushushushushushushushushush

as soon as you can

Dr G., intent on lunch, was oblivious.

gussshhhhhhhh drip drip drip

My ringtone slipped, submerged beneath the soap lather — foolish, missing Dr G.'s call for the sake of dishwashing, because I left my phone on the coffee table —embarrassing. The feeling bubbled for the fortnight until I found an appointment— Dr G., staring at her computer screen, sighed

No shadows no obstructions

Go see *ENT specialist*

I rang the reception of Dr B.. The man on the desk muttered

No appointments 'til January

Without any bargaining power, I accepted the cost of waiting—
not hearing half the farewells on my final day of work,
not noticing when my great-niece first began to talk,
not being included, in conversations I could not hold.

Running behind schedule, Dr B. saw me an hour late.

Patient SJ

Unbothered by pleasantries, he went straight to probing my ear.

sh

His schoolboy face, big and bemused, suddenly back in front of me—

sh

Didn't you hear that?

No, I'm sorry—

[illegible]

I said you'll need an MRI

[illegible]

Possibly a tumour

shshitshshitsh**shit**shshitshshshitshitshshitshshitshshitshitshitshitshitsh

shshitshshitshit**shitsh**shitshshshitshitshshitshshitshitshitshit

shshitshshitshshitshshitshshshitshitshshitshshitshshitshitshit

shshrrshshrrshrrshshshshshshshrrshshrrshshrrshshshrrshsh

bebebebebe zzzzzgrrrrr zzzgrrrrrr

Wrenched out of the machine, the MRI technician told me

sh

Results will take a week

I did not dare leave my phone on the coffee table.

Every day it stayed right in my right pocket,

and every buzz made my heart skip a beat

as my body braced for bad news —

every day for a week, over a week, two weeks, almost three.

I called the radiology clinic for an explanation and was given an excuse

Patient SJ

sh

Christmas backlog

My scan was sent back when ever-busy Dr B. had surgery.

He did not call for another five days, and even then, would only say

[illegible]

MRI shows not urgent

Worry could not keep quiet *not an urgent tumour?*

Not_{sh}an_{sh}urgent_{sh}tumour?_{shsh}Not_{sh}a_{sh}tumour?

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sh

My sticky note reminder has fallen from the fridge.

Thrown away, but memory refuses to let go

ENT 9:00am TUE Feb 24

This morning, Dr B. was stifling a yawn as I walked in—

he could not help it, my ear, had nothing to offer him—

no operable tumour, no recoverable hearing—

Disbelief blurted out, *no hearing in my left ear?*

[illegible]

Not since your August test

No hearing in my left ear since last year?

[illegible]

None to limited at best

No hearing from my left ear, and no one told me.

shshshshshshshshshShshshshshshshshshshshshshshshshshsh

Patient SJ

All I could think to ask was *what went wrong?*

The question puckered Dr B's petulant face

[illegible]

Unclear all these months later

He had not listened,

so I asked again—

how come no one told me?