

In the morning J. & I climb into our grandparent's bed to drink tea, that winter they read us Nicholas Nickleby while we rotate through the bath water scented with rose geranium. Last one in when menstruating.

There
was a doorway in
the stonewall going down
towards the docks, it was arched
and dark but it was not locked. Did
S. already know that when he took me
there?
I couldn't call out his name, I did not
know it then.
Later when we walked back up the
hill, there was a man in a red
sweater, but I don't think he
noticed us leave,
wasn't in contact.

I try to explain that the painting has marked
me repeatedly, gnawing in ways which won't
quite surface, but are persistent. Like remem-
bering being afraid of the dark.

There

was damp in the air.

That is what I remember about
that morning - although it had yet to
happen. There was the smell of rain. What
do you remember? Did you see me huddled
into my coat as I crossed the catenary bridge at
the top of the street and then a few minutes later re-
cross it. Did you notice the colour of the scarf I was
wearing? Or the way I felt 'eyes on me' as I kept my
head down? I know from what you said later, that
you had been observing me from the café with an
awning two doors down. You said it was misty
and the visibility was poor and yet you gave
me a detailed account that belies this.

I am sent to the post box down the lane, it is under a vast horse-
chestnut tree, a vertical rectangle of red in a garden wall.

I don't

know which of us caused
what was to happen next... years later
when I think about it, I will still contract, loose
my balance, be engulfed by it.
We were out of the range of the street cameras at that
point, knowing that we were not at risk of being seen.

I started to read Nausea but it was firmly replaced with Northanger Abbey.

We

are in the hotel,
the one with the view
I found on trip advisor
that I thought might match.
But it is all wrong, the sea is
in the other direction even
though the windows and
chimneys align.

A pair of chihuahua dogs.

My darling A.
I wear your
dressing gown

We met
for coffee,
we met for sex
and sometimes
we met for cake.
When we did, S.
kept checking for
messages.

There are
things I don't
want to think
about and there
are things you
cannot tell me so
I don't ask.

Your
photographic
memory recalls
names of things that
evade me, but you
have no sense of
direction. I have
to navigate.

The painting is done in a gloomy palette of yellow earths with slight blues and dirty pinks. Colours of winter.

I can
see harbour
masts beyond
a high wall
surrounding the
military zone.

Deep shadows don't belong
Light is
diffused.

B. taught me to
dead-head the
roses with a large
pair of secateurs.

The red peigobol

As I leave the shop I notice the street lights
I am in a minimart when
calls, looking aimlessly at
the shelves.
He said he is off to
Lyons, but I can sense his
dishonesty.

And I

am attempting to
hold onto a conversation I
had with Francis forty years ago in
his study, but it eludes me. The painting
was always in his study. I remember it to
the left of his desk under a window looking
out to the river, but I also know that is where
the bookcase was, so it couldn't have been. And
the river was on the left with a lawn in front and
would not have been seen from that angle. But I
do know it was a time when I was happy.

Liberty
print tie &
Chelsea boots

Oh Saint Agatha and Agnes Varda!
I cannot
hear you breathe,
in the silence it is as
if you are no longer
there, yet later I see you
walking next to me.
What possesses
you?

H. wants to know what I know.

The last time I met J. we had cardamom buns.

At first the interior smells of urine and pungent disinfectant and then you press into me and all I
can smell is our urgency. Those heady days now seem like something I have seen in a film watched
crossing the Atlantic.