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I'll Show You How To Use It

There's an orange button on the side that you need to press
then count to two before you talk.
If you don't count, the first part
of whatever you say may get lost.

Speak in clear sentences, don't trail off.
Pretend you are being interviewed on the radio
or telling your best friend you have feelings for her ex.

Think about what you are about to say before you speak
keep it short,
and when you are finished,
release the button so she can respond.
When two people hold it down at the same time,
the only thing anyone will be able to hear is static.

The sound is off right now.
When you are ready to reach someone,
turn the volume knob until you hear a click.

*I want you to do what's best for you
or It was never going to work with me and him,
may only be what she feels she has to say.
Count the number of seconds it takes her to respond
and pay attention to her pauses.*

The Proper Way To Look Out A Train Window

Would you like to look at where we're going or where we're coming from?
says a woman to her friend as they get onto the train
it sounds like a deep way
to say *there are tons of seats open and where should we sit?*
and I type her question into the list I've been keeping on my iPhone.

My friend Sarah insists on facing the direction we are going
because that way if there is something interesting in the distance,
a catchy billboard or cathedral, she can let its letters
or façade come into focus over time instead of scrambling to see it as we pass.

She made such a big deal out of this preference when we traveled through Europe together that I let her take the
forward-facing seat from Munich to Prague
and sat across from her next to a ten year old who played
a hand-held video game and kicked his left foot into my right leg for hours.
His mother was asleep.
I told Sarah to let me know if she saw something really cool a ways out.

The two ladies take a seat across the aisle from me,
and like me they are facing the way we're going.
You can't see the billboards if you face the way we're coming from,
just the metal scaffolding at their backs.
If they had taken longer to decide I would told them that.

Repairs

I have to stop thinking
about how there was little difference between the taste
of the inside of his mouth and mine,
the way we hugged for almost five minutes three weeks ago
as if we were reenacting the end of a rom-com
he held my face and said, *I will see you when I get back.*

The last call on my cell was from Jim, the repairman
who came to fix the washing machine in my apartment:
*Removed the hot water tank today, the damaged flooring, unclogged the drain pipe.
all connections were tested, are water tight.*

The machine has been disconnected from the wall and dragged
from the closet into the middle of the kitchen
in front of the microwave, making it possible for only one person
to access the stove at a time.
*It feels like we have this third roommate who stands there,
watching me chop onions, I tell my roommate.*
I repeatedly forget it's there and freak on my way to the bathroom.

Jim will be back next week to finish the repairs:
*sand and smooth the walls of the closet,
paint with a gloss that better resists moisture
then reinstall, test the machinery, clean up and leave.*
The next time he calls I'll try not to dive for the phone.

What You Want To See

I have in mind a two story apartment building,
the second floor of which is a spaceship
that, through alien technology and holograms,
lures lonely passerby inside, never to leave.

There is also Craig, the man who lives on the first floor:
in love with his best friend Sophie
but because he doesn't think he's attractive,
he cannot imagine she does either.
She carries an extra key to his apartment
on a keychain attached to a pink rabbit's foot.

We learn the spaceship has concealed itself
by using a perception filter: a device that not only alters
the way people see the building,
but also how they remember it.

This made me think about a conversation I had with a friend
about the floaters in her eyes.
Dark spots that dart through peripheral vision
She says they used to freak her out.
she would think there was a robber in her apartment, or a ghost.

She cannot identify a mouse until it runs directly in front of her.
By now she's determined that half of what
she sees move past her
only exists in the corners of her eyes.