

On Hearing Brian Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*

1/1

This was music meant for the scene
where the girl walks home in winter.

And the cars should make noise
and the wind should make noise
and her boots on the ice should make noise –

but the sounds have gone missing.

Only low tones hummed to a jar.
A song sung through glass.

The hollow drone of falling snow
as chapped hands hold breath.

This was music meant for silence.

It was meant for the scene
with the tortured movement,

for the lurching and keening, muted,
while the short, wet hair licks her cheeks.

Music for the scene that needs salvage.

Whether your warm wind melted snow or merely moved it,
somewhere else now, it still tilts at windmills,

leaving nothing to lean against in winter.

1/2

In this part your lips move to the rim of the glass.

I am silent.

What I want to say is that if you had been here

I might not have placed the whole kitchen in a green bin and emptied it,
piece by piece,
into the frozen street.

I want to say that I didn't pull the hanging blinds from their frames –

that I didn't linger coatless on the sidewalk, listening.

In this part warm water falls on your chest.

On the tub floor, I am all hands and knees.

Yes, there was glass in the shower.

Yes, there was glass in the garbage.

Yes, I cut my palms when I threw what I ruined away.

What I want to say is guttural –
that this was music meant for human voices.

Yes, I tried to break it.

In this part, an empty jar.

2/1

This is the space between water and frozen water,
where I woke
on the morning of our very first snow.

Reveling in a change of season –
in a change of scenery –
I wrote a letter on beauty.

But I had no motor to keep those tones going
and now this frigid, cracking glass won't leave.
How does one sustain this?

This is the space where I write it all down –
where I try to remember –
But I can only freeze things, can only make them still.

In this scene I stand over a sinkful of tresses.
Ice clings to the panes and later I fall in love.
When I had long hair, I could hide in it.

In this scene drafts seep through your window.
There are tiny tealights, my hands are too cold
and we laugh and laugh.

Then the part with the girl
who could better weather harsh winters –
the part where I spill into a pile of snow and broken glass.

This music evades image –
its hollow ring only fingers circling thin rims.
A sustain I cannot capture.

Now I am in the empty kitchen
filling egg cartons with cold water.
Here I am freezing things again.

This is the space for low tones,
for the strings of the old piano that, unraveled,
rattle as I tiptoe over the floor –

the music of a house asleep in winter.

2/2

Music meant for a second wintry morning –
for a scene in which the days grow long.

Yes, there is a kitchen with no dishes.
Yes, there is a freezer full of ice cubes,

but now the street is filled with tiny, glistening gifts –
as if the collapse held only elegance.

Again I am writing on beauty –
this second, severed letter –

What I want to say is that glass that fractures without freezing –

This has everything to do with breakage
in the most incorporeal sense.

Holding only hollow tones,
I am still talking to you about resonance.

This was music meant for you,

who of anyone
understood the meaning of the word “salvage” –

always keeping the things no one wanted –
sifting the ice from the shards of glass.