

When I get back to the apartments, the buzzer is still broken, and there is a sign that says something like: *if you call out, no one is listening*. Accidental poetry, grief in motion. No one lives here if they still believe in anything. That's what I think, anyway, but my mother would say, *Garrett*, she'd say, *you're being depressing*, like somehow such a thing is being knee-deep in sinning, arrest warrant, guillotine. The key clicks in the lock. There's a ghost of an old one still in there, and I can feel it when I slide the teeth in. Some things live forever, even without us meaning.

It's not a bad place. I've lived in worse. They've set a carpet in the front room, and the plants by the doors are tall and wide, green leaves fanning like fireplace plumes, though the roof sags and the wood's splitting. I don't blame them for this. No person wants to live in a cage, unless they can believe it's been put there themselves. When I climb in the elevator, it rattles from my weight, and sometimes, like now, you can smell whatever the others eat. It gets in the vents, permeates the carpet. It bothers me. It's something about knowing the others are right there, just out of reach. Unwelcome intimacies, like an open window on a hot day, or when you're singing in your car at a traffic light. It's like saying, *I am the same as anyone*, when I am burning somewhere, from the inside out.

There's garbage in the hall to my room. Two doors down.  
Wet beans, sauerkraut.

My apartment is big enough for me to move between rooms, but I don't. I sleep on the couch, adjacent to the kitchen, ten feet from the bathroom. The door to the balcony is also here, but it's been boarded shut. My father doesn't speak much, but what he does says enough. Red tape, chalk mark, do not cross. There really isn't any need to be outside so high up, though sometimes on holidays, the kids go to the park across the road and light it up, spark, crackle, firework, and I used to like how the smell of burning got in my lungs. Not pleasant, exactly, but familiar in a vague sort of way, like driving by the place you grew up, the ghost of yourself still in the window, trophies on the wall, rotary club.

I lean over, light a cigarette. It's good he's done this, with the boards. Like that man outside the store, his fractured, *you alright?*, I see it in their eyes just the same as mine, in the mirror, soda-lime glass, gilded frame. A man likes a cage he's put himself in.

He could learn to live anywhere, if it came to that.