

Alzheimer's translation: Consonance

Make sure that she understands that she can't stay alone in here. I wanna tell you how, just, difficult it is to be alive in this kind of situation—because you know she might say to you hey I might do some laundry but what she'll do is steal things, I'm telling you, I've been with her a lot of times. Please, please Alex, and call her tomorrow morning, she's an awful person, unlike you, my darling. I love you sweetheart, my numero uno. My whole life, please, is depending on you calling me. Otherwise I don't think I'd be able to survive. Call me or else I'll never sleep or I'll never breathe.

—Father's voice message

“Black square” is its shape
in his hands, what he calls it.

The straight and narrow
is hard for sons

to follow, awash
as they are in suffering, so

they call the father's phone
and watch him botch it.

“Swipe right and speak”
is too thistly for him. Then

their skittish drumfire:
that same laughter

as when told hellish,
deathful news to your face

that must translate
the shived bone of your heart

all at once, but shorts out;
or as when,

supine, exam table,
a gloved doctor tenders

your most secret—
then *Cough*.

Tension, never yet
have we learned how

to release you well
from our netherest regions,

where fear
vibrates, deep in the lap

like a missed call's *tsk*.
The father dares bend close

to hear the joke—timing
is all he has—

but his square is only
blacken and buzz.