The Sleepy Beauties of Sound

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…the terra-incognita blanks map-makers of old
used to call ‘sleepy beauties.’
—Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory

Not much practice yet
at blurs, garbles,
dropped syllables—unless you count
the losses on a poor
phone connection or when someone
turns the music down.

The next season though
could slam a door
and I might not look up
from a book. I’d be motionless,
riding the kind of current
no one else would notice, a quiet,
fuller than any noise.

For now it’s guesswork: a territory
full of unmapped regions,
where paths revert to weeds,
and one only advances
by descent—so many steps
from the imagined to the lived.
And no rush to get there—

I’ve already caught myself
resisting under my breath,
not this, not that—
not sparrows rioting in the Euonymus
or the clatter of dishes in the sink,
not even the soft grinding
as I wind my watch.

terrifying as it is sad, because at these moments, I am excluded from the world of talk. Even if I have weighed the importance of the talk and decided I can live without it, I am losing out.

We probably can live without most conversation. But for most humans, with the exceptions of the whistling nuns in Brooklyn and certain varieties of monks, conversation defines life here on the chatter planet. It is another music which, pending our spiritual transcendence, we need in order to feel fully alive. My deaf tendency is to sacrifice myself to the convenience of others. I let something go that I ought to seize hold of. I am certain there were moments when Bach realized he had taken away one too many notes and killed the beauty of a Cello Suite, so he put that note back in. Being deaf requires we let go of some things. But not everything.

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