

Absent City

by Abbey Hunt

There's not much light left coming through the trees. I forgot to hang out my washing. My neighbor's kid is crying and I sit here, listening to the crows. The cat walks around with his belly to the ground. If he sinks low enough nobody will see him. Someone walks by the courtyard and he darts back inside. I paid my hot water bill yesterday. I installed a new ringtone on my phone. I went for a stroll to the park and choked on car fumes. The noise of the engines rumbling past unsettled me more than usual.

Did you know there's a rock-climbing wall along the river? A long artificial cliff face, almost like the real thing. I found it when I misinterpreted my GPS, trying to get home. The bridge over the river was lit up with strings of multicoloured lights. I suppose it was beautiful. But more the kind of beauty you see when you're trying to find it.

I pulled out in front of someone in my new car the other day. I wanted to say sorry. They followed me for a while, beeping, then pulled up beside me. Their angry face hurling insults I couldn't hear.

It took me forty-five minutes to travel seven kilometers. The radio hosts here keep offering money. 9 A.M. and there's nothing but news. Somebody shot someone. Someone kicked a goal or something. There's traffic somewhere.

I spent money on a TV mount. My eyes now sit in a more comfortable position.

The laundry tap is leaking. The plumber can't come for another two days.

I'm waiting on a delivery I could have picked up myself in a span of twenty minutes. Now I can't leave to go food shopping.

My mailbox is full of letters to previous tenants marked 'urgent'. I keep them in a pile next to my door, but what am I supposed to do with them?

There's a message from you. 'How's the new place?'

Great, all settled in. Smiley face.

'How's the job search?'

Hopeful.

'How's the cat?'

He's fine. I gave him a flea tablet yesterday, and now he's stopped scratching.

'That's great.'

When can you come visit?

'I'm pretty swamped. Maybe in two weeks?'

Ok.

I forgot I had leftovers in the fridge, and I didn't have to make anything for lunch. It was a happy surprise. No. I don't have anything new to tell you.

I don't have any plans tomorrow. Maybe I'll wander around, grab a coffee. Call a friend. I have friends here I haven't reached out to yet. I don't want to explain what happened. How empty my heart felt. How we spent so much time with an ocean between us, and you never learned to swim.

'How are you, really?'

I'm fine. It'll be good to see you.