

Saturday night at the venue where the music is loud. The music is so loud I can't even hear it. I hear the ring from the kick mic mixing with the bass sub. I hear a wall of rumble and a voice lost inside it. My own, or the singer's, it's impossible to tell. It's impossible to talk. But I'm pretty sure I'm trying.

Tonight the high ceilings of the theatre feel low. They're painted gold and beveled like a wristwatch. They're ugly like a wristwatch. And I duck my head like I'm in danger of bumping against the plaster.

I'm back in town and I'm out on the town. Outside the venue the streets are full of people who could say the same thing. Tonight feels like society. Like I should be pointing and whispering. But I don't see anyone I truly recognize. Only people I've seen before. But we're free to be strangers now. To me, that's forgiveness.

The gold-embossed theatre is selling cans of beer for 12 dollars. The hand-me-down theatre is hosting a low roar on the mainstage. You lean in close to tell me someone I don't like just arrived. And I hear it like it's blood in my ears. Like a held shell full of ocean. And I'm adrift for just that moment. In a theatre gaudy as a conch.

The last two years were hard for me to write during. For a while there I wasn't sure I wasn't dead. How to turn noise into music? How to squeeze the gold from out of lead? But these are questions I've stopped asking. Some signals are too great to be distinguished. Some dissonances sound sweeter than "welcome home".

I'm back in town but not one I know. You said something to me but I couldn't make it out. They wronged me in some fashion that is going out of style. There's lead in the water, there's gold on the ceiling. And the band is playing an encore that I certainly didn't ask for. But I hear blood in my ears and I'm getting better at survival. You're not who you think you are but neither am I. To me, that's forgiveness.

