

Watch the movie with the sound off.

A year ago I had nothing but didn't panic. I showed up at the church picnic. I shook hands and retained names. The eager way I lean in to hear someone better. Unable to read lips. Missing the cue but noticing I missed it. Reminding you of my name. Not offended to be misunderstood. Happy to repeat myself. Walk away devastated in some incalculable way.

This year is different. I'm reading the same authors. I'm listening to the same music. And the panic sets in.

A message saying we haven't seen you at church in a while. A rejection of some kind. Two separate conversations that end with, weren't we doing this a year ago? Finding something I stole to still be in my pocket.

The guilt of things I haven't done. My incomplete albums. Hurt I can't resolve. People I haven't responded to. Promises abandoned like drawings.

Dissonance is still an allusion. Hear the resolution that's not there. "The notes you don't play" ha ha.

Loss of faith is a cliché. And an impossibility. Faith is loss. The strict accounting of what I don't possess. The only reality. To lose faith would mean cooking the books. Writing yourself a check for more than you have. Declaring myself Miss America.

I know this is a musician's newsletter. I haven't forgotten by the way.

Talking to an audience is never a conversation. I'm on stage between songs. Waiting to catch the next one. But it's wrong to call it banter. And wrong to think it's monologuing. I'm not talking to myself. I'm addressing no one. A fixed and palpable entity. A tangible absence. And that's who I engage with. An actor without lines. Or whose only line is silence. Scripted to listen. Watch the movie with the sound off.

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I'm often excusing my own absence. Pointing at the outline of myself I've drawn around air. Saying, that's where I am. That's actually me. I push you out of my chalk circle. I make space for more emptiness. I'm sorry but I'm not. Where I just was is where I still am. If I didn't tell you that doesn't mean it's a secret. This isn't my diary but it's still nobody's business.

