

If the ear speaks, it is she.

My mother calls me jungle when I cut my own hair,  
refusing to be a girl on the verge of thirteen. Wild.  
Untameable. From an imaginary jungle. Months ago,  
I learned that jungle was a slur used by the British in  
India. I made a note and lost the note I made. Trying to  
remember it now, I think of the sound my skin makes  
when it's tanned. When it pales. There is a being who can  
listen to the light rising and setting. Frequencies emitted  
by the sun when it dips into the seam of ocean and sky.

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If the ear speaks, she is forgetting.

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First night at my parents' house after ten years. An hour  
into dream, I'm convinced we are caught in a riot, that  
a war encroaches. We must get out. I follow a tattoo of  
gunshots. A whistling hole through glass. Thick thud  
against metal. A banging into wood. Booming in the  
hollow. I wake and someone slaps their feet on the tile,  
finishes the rhythm. One-two. I feel blown out. Tired.

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If the ear speaks, she is a repeater.

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East Vancouver. I am sick from another contagion, porous through the walls. My neighbours, eavesdropping. If I wash my hands, they run the tap. If I crack open a can, they crack one too. One of them outside my window. Lips pressed against the sill. "I want to see you." This can't happen to me again. But it does. I am being stalked. I pee without making a sound. I wake with an inch of light. I see them on the street and pretend to speak into my phone. I fantasize a thick red house. Reams of glue between bricks, blocking the air. Not a sound. I am so disgusted, I cry. So angry, a hot knot twists inside my brain. I have been told I have the gene for misophonia. I have been told I have perfect pitch. I have been told I may be autistic.

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If the ear speaks, she is leaving.

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I'm ten years old. We pass kebabs across the dinner table. Grandpa and me quiet as shells. I place my fingers over my ears, over the cartilage flap called the tragus. Press hard until we're giggling underwater. Then I bend. Press the red button on the stereo by my feet. The tape glides into light. Dad's adventures in traffic. Grandpa betting on horses. Grandma's news from mosque. An incomprehensible need. To save the voices of my family, to listen, over and over again. Words eclipsing and total, even now.

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If the ear speaks, she is joy.

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