

It is 12:00 am.

It is 12:00 am and we are sitting on the top of her car, my shoes rested gently against the windshield. I can sense her behind me, though I don't turn to face her. I am thinking about our combined weight on the roof of her car, becoming increasingly conscious of gravity pressing down upon us. On some illogical impulse I shift my weight and lift my hands. They hesitate in the air a moment before settling back against my thighs. My palms feel cold against the metal.

It is 12:04 am.

I study the shapes of the hills in the dark. I read once that in the absence of light, the human brain seeks out the familiar. A primordial skill, but one with consequence when people see faces and figures in the dark that aren't quite right.

I don't see anything in the hills. Just a vague impression that my brain is willing to accept as the rise and fall of land.

It is 12:06 am.

I feel her hand brush up against mine. Her fingertips rest beside my own, and I am more aware of her presence than ever. I know I should turn to face her, but gravity holds me in place. I wonder what her face looks like in the dark. It occurs to me that my brain may fill in the gaps, and I imagine her features shifting in the dim light; The curve of her cheekbones, the bridge of her nose, the shape of her eyebrows, all subtly wrong. It is an uncomfortable thought. My hand shifts away before I can consider the consequences. It is done. The moment is over, the night has ended. My eyes are fixed on the hills as I hear the impact of her shoes on gravel.

It is 12:10 am.

We drive in silence. It is not unfriendly, and when I glance across she offers me a smile. But her eyes are distracted and far away. I suppose mine are too. The integrity of her face remains intact under the dim, shifting light of the streetlamps. She is whole and perfect, safe from my brain's flawed interpretation. It feels impossible to explain this to her, but the silence is comfortable and brings its own sense of understanding. I close my eyes and let the artificial light wash over us. For now, it is enough.