Tower Block Twelve

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| Tonight the piano on the fifth floor  falls silent as the militia dismantle it  to search for hidden notes. The pianist  tells them her musical score is a photo album  of sparrows on telegraph wires  & the electricity is about to slip through  the cracks in the sun-dried rubber. | Next door, a retired teacher calls  the number to her son’s flat over & over  but there’s no answer & although she thinks  the militia know where he is, they  tell her nothing. So she bakes  a tray of challah bread as if  the dead could stave off hunger. |
| Two floors up, a wild girl hides in a cupboard  with a jacquard curtain for a door while a chair  falls on the lino floor. A mother and a father  are being emptied out, so what they shout  to each other reverberates through  each hollowed ribcage & ties them  together the way barbed wire would. | Time expands in flat 22, where the woman  who wants a divorce can’t even find  happiness on her TV screen or in the lives  of her neighbours. She watches her husband  as he puts on a slick raincoat & she thinks  he is one of the informants  living in tower block twelve. |
| A blue car ran over the man in flat 16  because a photograph of him leaving the queue for milk proved that he’d wanted to defect.  But first they told him, an unexpressed thought  is easy to read if you watch someone for long enough. The spider trapped in the man’s suitcase  is starving but, just like us, it can’t get out. | Next door, I wait for my parents  to come home & each time they do,  their footsteps are lighter as if  they’d lost something of themselves  & I think this means they would  shrink to nothing so each day  I have to weigh what is left. |