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 callsthe number to her son’s flat over & over but there’s no answer & although she thinks the militia know where he is, theytell her nothing. So she bakes a tray of challah bread as ifthe 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 themtogether 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 16because a photograph of him leaving the queue for milk proved that he’d wanted to defect. But first they told him, an unexpressed thoughtis 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 parentsto come home & each time they do,their footsteps are lighter as ifthey’d lost something of themselves& I think this means they wouldshrink to nothing so each day I have to weigh what is left. |