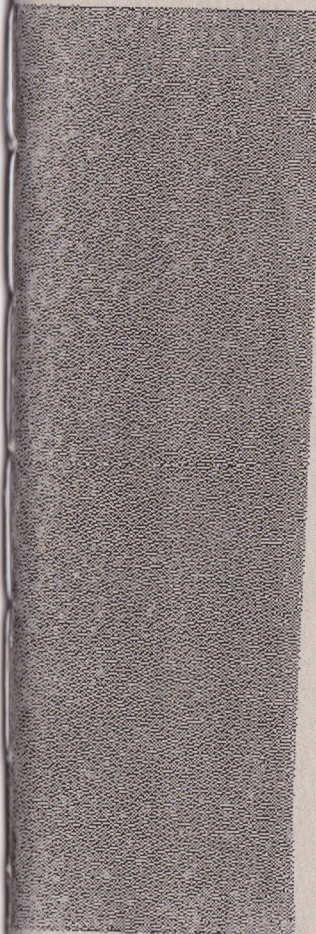
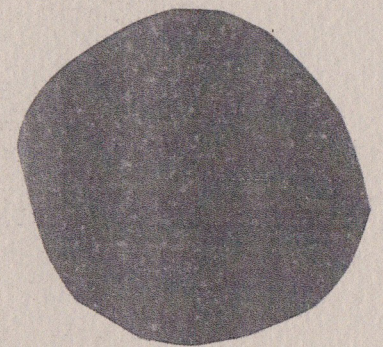
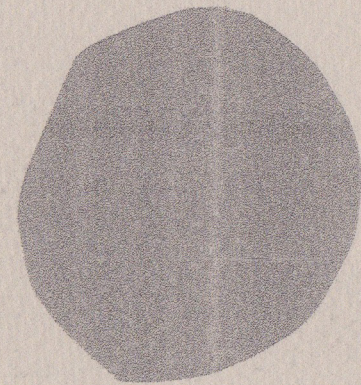
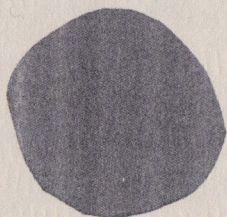


THE WINDOWLESS HOTEL ROOM

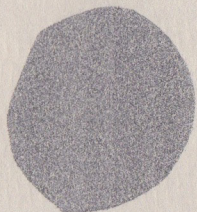


THE WINDOWLESS HOTEL ROOM

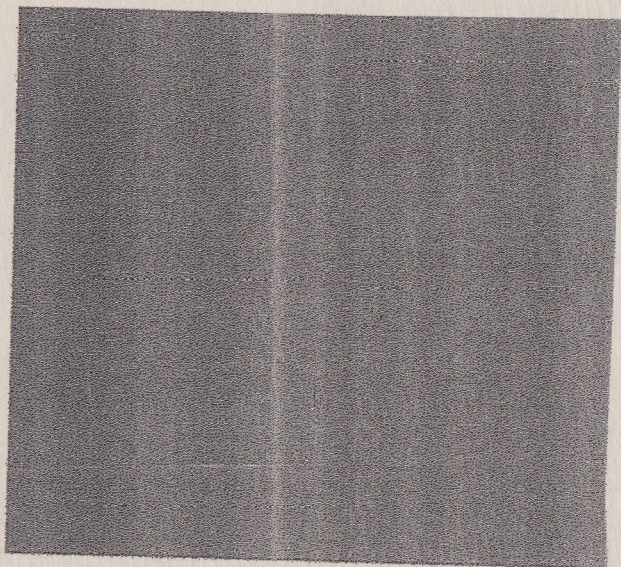
CHARACTERS



She



He



The Room

The figure strikes a soft silhouette, topped with a sharp triangular bob of wild, black, frizzy corkscrew curls. The body is solidly rooted to the ground while flexible and quick in movement. The voice lilts, quick-stepping across the Atlantic with each line uttered. We encounter SHE upon entering THE ROOM.

The body is topped with golden hair that loops in gravity-defying waves. Matched with slim spaghetti limbs, the figure moves with youthful energy; so nimble and springy on the balls of the feet that contact is hardly made with the solid ground underneath. While the voice is soft and cautious, the laugh is full-bellied and genuine. We encounter HE upon entering THE ROOM.

The still surface constitutes four light grey plastered and painted walls adjoined at the corners, one white ceiling, and a floor of dark grey carpet. The heavy fireproof door, the only point of passage towards all that lies beyond, is the threshold through which all the inhabitants enter and eventually exit. Fragments of stories pass through the door, each one utterly consuming, contributing towards the entirety of the known universe within. We encounter THE ROOM as SHE and HE enter.

THE WINDOWLESS HOTEL ROOM
A play in three acts

SETTING

TIME

ACT I: One Night

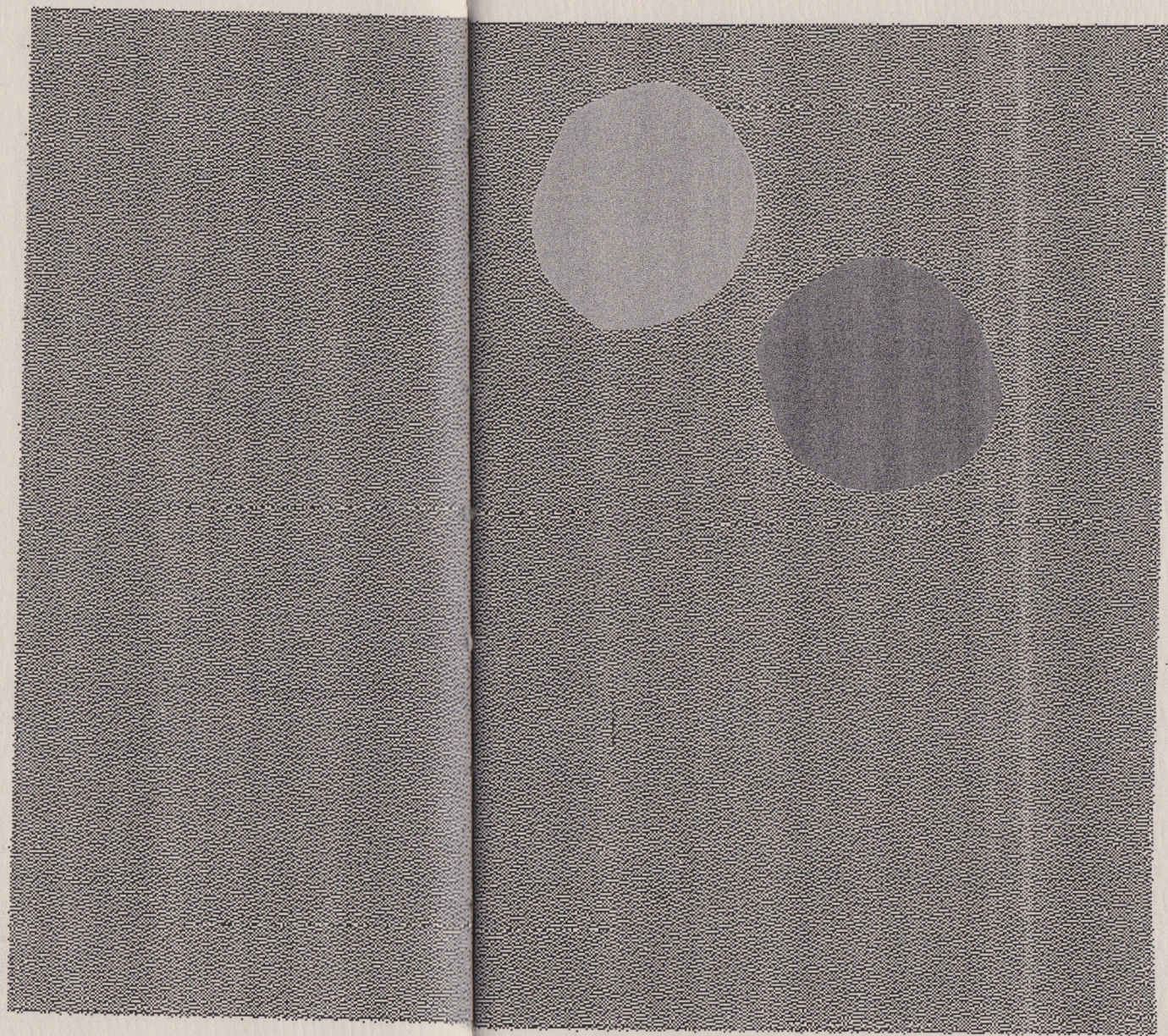
ACT II: One Morning

ACT III: Another Clean

A recalled memory. All three acts of the memory are located inside THE ROOM which is positioned somewhere deep within the labyrinthine caverns of a hotel. We encounter THE ROOM when paths cross with SHE and HE during one night and one subsequent morning of occupancy.

The siteless, immaterial substance of the memory has existed, until now, in fragmentary and amorphous form through flashes of recollection within the individual consciousness of SHE and HE and THE ROOM. The memory finds physical site here within the pages of the script.

Has fogged certain recollections, and crystallised others.



THE WINDOWLESS HOTEL ROOM

AT RISE:

THE ROOM is pitch black and empty of inhabitants.

THE ROOM

(PROLONGED SILENCE— All that can be perceived is the quiet, persistent hum of the air conditioning unit)

SHE

THE ROOM

ACT I: One Night

The dust particles inside, sent erupted into the air during the last cleaning process, settle down into yet another random composition. All is still. THE ROOM is ready for the next inhabitants and the certain promise for short-lived company; to blindly plunge into narratives, hook on to clues, draw conclusions. For THE ROOM, time spent inhabited is a welcome contrast to the monotony of daytime's cleaning routines and vacant silence. Unable to access natural light and dependent upon mechanically circulated air, THE ROOM often experiences spells of temporal confusion. Barred from the cosmic rhythms that orientate the world beyond the six flat faces, THE ROOM charts the oscillating patterns and rituals surrounding occupation and vacancy to gather a notion of time's passage.

The door to THE ROOM beeps, the doorknob turns. Suddenly— the door swings open. THE ROOM does not startle at this sudden eruption.

SHE and HE pass through the door's threshold to enter THE ROOM. SHE carries a black backpack from the right shoulder. HE carries a burgundy backpack from both shoulders. HE grasps a tattered navy blue duffel bag with both hands. HE has a plastic bag containing two sandwiches and a container of purple grapes hanging from the wrist.

Fumbles for the light switch for a second— and finds it. SHE flicks the light on.

Flickers as the top light switches on. The bathroom light follows. In the light, THE ROOM is able to draw initial impressions of the new inhabitants.

SHE

(Relieved exhalation)

Okay! Here we are...

HE

Great!

HE

THE ROOM

SHE

Ha! Oh my gosh, no way...

Look at this!... Really rubs it in, doesn't it.

THE ROOM

SHE

You know, when I booked this I didn't mind the idea of staying in a windowless room whatsoever. But it did keep me up that night. Just the thought of there only being one way outside, it really got to me once I started thinking about it...

A relaxed, cartoonish smile is topped by crinkled eyes which are slightly blackened underneath from smeared makeup.

The eyes are sunken and grey, appearing to be short on sleep.

Eager to seek relief from the hefty weight of luggage, SHE and HE drop their bags at the corner of THE ROOM's desk.

Places the plastic bag on top of the desk with a light *thump* and a *rustle*.

Welcomes the fresh waft of air from beyond. THE ROOM becomes familiar with the perfume of the new inhabitants as the new scent diffuses slowly into all corners of the room, carving out THE ROOM's territory for the inhabitants' own.

Skips to a corner of THE ROOM, reaches out to touch the light fabric of a curtain which comprises a key decorative flourish. The windowless corner is dressed with two dramatic floor-length voile curtains. Each upheld by a slender rod, the two lengths of translucent fabric nearly grace the full vertical surface of the wall, dropping to an inch above the carpeted floor.

Stirred by SHE's touch. The voile curtain breezes delicately.

HE

(Laughing)

Yeah, but it's okay though— for the night. If we were staying any longer, this would be the most depressing place, ever.

THE ROOM

SHE

Gosh, yeah it would be. But you know, as I was telling you the other day, rooms in hostels were running for more than it cost for us to stay here tonight. (Pauses) Yeah. So... this is absolutely fine.

HE

(Gently)

I wasn't sure if you'd have eaten so I bought these sandwiches...

SHE

Aww, you bought sammies!? That's very sweet.

(Jokingly)

Just as well we stopped at Burger King for those chippies, then...! What have you got?

Walks towards the windowless corner, stopping behind SHE. HE's hands settle at SHE's waist.

Is no stranger to such comments passed within the walls. THE ROOM has heard it all before, in various arrangements of phrasing.

Relieved to sense HE's endorsement of the budgetary decision, SHE again feels pleased with the bargain.

SHE walks towards the edge of the bed, sits down. The soft mattress and duvet depress under the weight. The body relaxes at this comfort. SHE perches on the edge of the bed whilst untying shoelaces. SHE tosses the shoes in the direction of the velveteen wingback chair near the windowless corner.

HE picks up the plastic bag from the desk. HE removes two sandwiches from the plastic bag. The sandwiches are convenience store-bought, wrapped tightly in cling film and sealed with a sticky label. The squashed innards are held in form only by the constraint of the thin, transparent wrapping.

Springs up from the bed to get a closer look.

SHE is as touched by HE's thoughtfulness as entertained by the unappealing selection.

HE
I've got chicken and... something. Or tomato and mozzarella?

SHE
Hmm. You pick whichever one you want, I don't think I'm hungry for one right now. Maybe in a little bit.

HE
Yeah, I don't think I want one now either.

SHE

HE
Let me put some tunes on...

SHE

THE ROOM

HE, too, thinks the sandwiches look disgusting. HE wishes to step back in time and unmake the decision to purchase them.

SHE feels queasy at the sight of the goopy, squashed sandwiches, but finds HE's efforts endearing and thoughtful.

Tossing the sandwiches back on the desk, HE unveils the clear plastic punnet of grapes and peels away the seal. HE extends the container in SHE's direction.

Happily picks at a grape or two, nibbling at them with an easy smile. SHE walks back over to the bed. Legs give way in a bouncy flop.

Crouches down in front of THE ROOM's windowless corner, between the desk and the velveteen wingback chair. HE rummages inside the backpack for the laptop.

Feels the soul revived in HE's presence, though the body is physically exhausted from the day's travels. Despite earlier justifications for the cheap room, SHE still feels reasonably unsettled here. SHE glances past HE towards the windowless corner of THE ROOM, dressed in waves of voile.

Glares back towards SHE, positioned at the centre of THE ROOM's sphere.

SHE

Stares at the windowless corner of THE ROOM. Thinking about how the sheer material supposedly stands in as a satisfactory symbol for 'window-ness', SHE feels that the curtains rather mournfully delineate an absence where a window could never be. The voile panels anxiously remind SHE of quite how deep into the labyrinthine caverns of this place SHE and HE are. SHE wonders how far from any given window they might be.

THE ROOM

Reverberates slightly as sound waves bounce off the six faces of THE ROOM's surface.

HE

Sets the laptop upon the velveteen wingback chair. HE walks over to the bed.

SHE

Lies down on the bed, giddy and relieved to finally be in HE's proximity after what felt like such a long time. It has been three weeks since SHE was last inside a room with HE.

HE

Lies down on the bed and nestles into SHE.

SHE

Wraps two arms around HE.

(Sleepily, with affection)

I'm so happy you're here.

HE

(Affectionately, in return)

Me too.

SHE

Is glad it is late. SHE feels reassured in the fact that it is as dark out there as it was dark in here before the light switch was flicked on inside THE ROOM. It makes a necessary reliance on artificial electric light feel far more natural.

SHE switches one of the bedside lights on, a source of homely warm glow, making the unfamiliar setting 'theirs'. THE ROOM is 'their' house, for now. SHE thinks about the way that any place where they are together has the capability of feeling like home.

SHE holds a hand out to the bedside table, reaching for the light switch.

THE ROOM

Is plunged from a dimly lit glow to pitch black darkness in an instant.
(BLACKOUT)

(PROLONGED SILENCE—)

THE ROOM

Rests silently, wrapping HE and SHE tightly in a shroud of darkness, holding them securely in place as they lie dormant and still. The silent passage of night is conveyed only by the faint yet unrelenting buzz of the air conditioning unit.

(PROLONGED SILENCE CONTINUES— The quiet, persistent hum of the air conditioning unit fades in and out of perception.)

Some time has passed. By now THE ROOM and SHE and HE are deep into the night... or have they made it as far as early morning? THE ROOM struggles to tell for sure without any objective frame of reference. In here, night-time and daytime are dictated by the light switch.

HE

Lies asleep. HE rolls onto his back from his right side. SUDDENLY— Body bolts upright. Eyes tight shut, furrowed brow.

(Voice erupts into the dark with a murmuring SHOUT)

No— no— no!

SHE

(Groggily)

Huh...

Startled awake by HE's commotion.

SHE is not a stranger to HE's tendencies to speak and mumble and rummage around in the night. As involuntarily as the sleep-walks and sleep-talks erupt, SHE's responses to HE's stirrings are no less automatic.

THE ROOM

Startled to attention. THE ROOM observes the scene; curiosity piqued.

SHE

(Whispering)

Hey...

Gently nudges HE.

Hey, hey, hey. Shh...

Reaching out both arms towards HE.

Come here.

SHE holds HE in both arms. SHE doesn't think this touch quite wakes HE, but recognises a calming in the body held.

HE

Is still asleep, HE can perceive SHE's presence and this causes the body and mind to settle.

SHE

Wonders what kind of nightmare is so vividly present in HE's mind.

HE

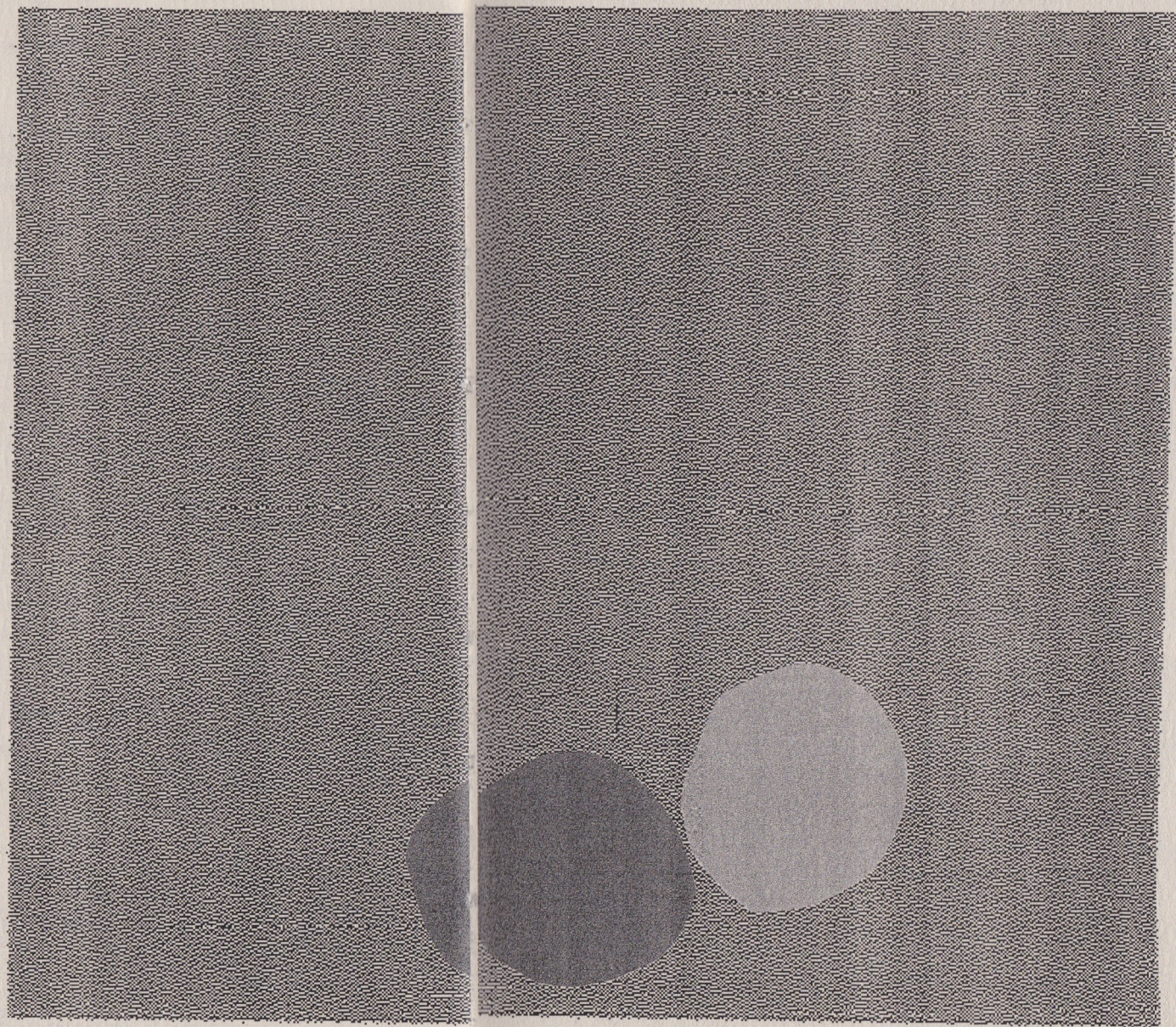
Settles into silence.

SHE

Settles into silence.

(PROLONGED SILENCE— The persistent hum of the air conditioning unit is the only perceptible sound)

(CURTAIN. End of ACT I)



AT RISE:

THE ROOM is pitch black and still inhabited by SHE and HE, who have been lying dormant since late the night before.

THE ROOM

SHE

THE ROOM

ACT II: One Morning

Can barely make out the two horizontal bodily forms of SHE and HE, lumped underneath the duvet. THE ROOM recognises that there is not so much that is at all distinguishable between any of the inhabitants when they lie here asleep in the bed.

Blinks into the first hazes of wakefulness with no notion of time or space. SHE stares blankly: blinking eyes, a disembodied consciousness staring out into the veiled dark. SHE breathes the lungs full of dry, recycled, and conditioned air. SHE wonders whether the world outside remains as it was upon last contact. Eyes adjusting, SHE sees large, soft lumps on the ground like stepping-stones—cushions tossed during last night's throes, clues to whereabouts in this sensorially deprived container. SHE gazes at the darkness above, where the ceiling must surely be, and tries to fix blurry eyes on an imaginary spot. SHE wonders whether it is morning yet. SHE considers that, perhaps, without environmental cues to provoke waking, the morning has been missed entirely. Perhaps morning has already turned to day, day has already turned to night, and they have slept through the entirety of daylight's arc, only to be plummeted yet again into night's darkness. Who is to know, in here? If it is indeed the day SHE thinks it is, tomorrow marks SHE's 25th birthday.

SHE pats around the bedside table in a fumble, rustling the crisp, feather duvet. SHE feels for a lamp, identifying the light switch with fingertips.

Manifests a dim, warm glow from the dark.

SHE

(In a whisper)

Sunrise.

SHE looks over to HE, still fast asleep. SHE recollects how HE was tossing, turning, murmuring and shouting out into the darkness during outbursts in the night. To SHE, HE seemed so anxious and sad. SHE is used to witnessing HE's vivid imagination erupting into the enlivened realm of dreams, but it strikes as unusual and out of character to observe HE in such a state of distress. SHE wonders whether this might be due to the intensity of a project undertaken by HE before they met here. SHE senses that there might be more to it than that.

HE

Wakes, slowly. Eyes still closed. HE reaches out for SHE. HE pulls SHE closer.

SHE

Holds HE. SHE is waiting for HE to speak, to set the morning's tone. In the meantime SHE strokes fingers through the threads of HE's hair. HE says nothing, so SHE prepares to speak first.

(Delivered in a whispered, sing-song tone)

Guess what... It's my Birthday Eve!

HE

The face is half-squashed into the pillow.

(Groggily waking, voice is muffled)

Happy Birthday Eve...

HE kisses SHE. HE closes both eyes. The brow furrows.

SHE

Certainly, now, recognises a sadness in HE.

(Gently)

Do you remember talking in your sleep last night? You seemed so distressed, you must have had some kind of nightmare. Do you remember it?

HE

Yeah. I kept having really... really awful dreams.

HE breathes deeply into SHE's shoulder, then momentarily buries the face back into the pillow before HE speaks.

SHE
(Hopefully)
Probably just all that leftover stress from running the workshop, maybe?

HE
(Releases a slow exhalation through the nose)

No. It's something else. I need to tell you.
(Pause)

SHE

HE
I did something.

SHE
(Pause)

HE

SHE

(Pause)

Okay.

(Pauses to breathe and to swallow the lump in the throat)

Tell me.

HE's arms tighten to pull SHE closer.

Blinks. Surprised, shocked, frightened, unprepared—

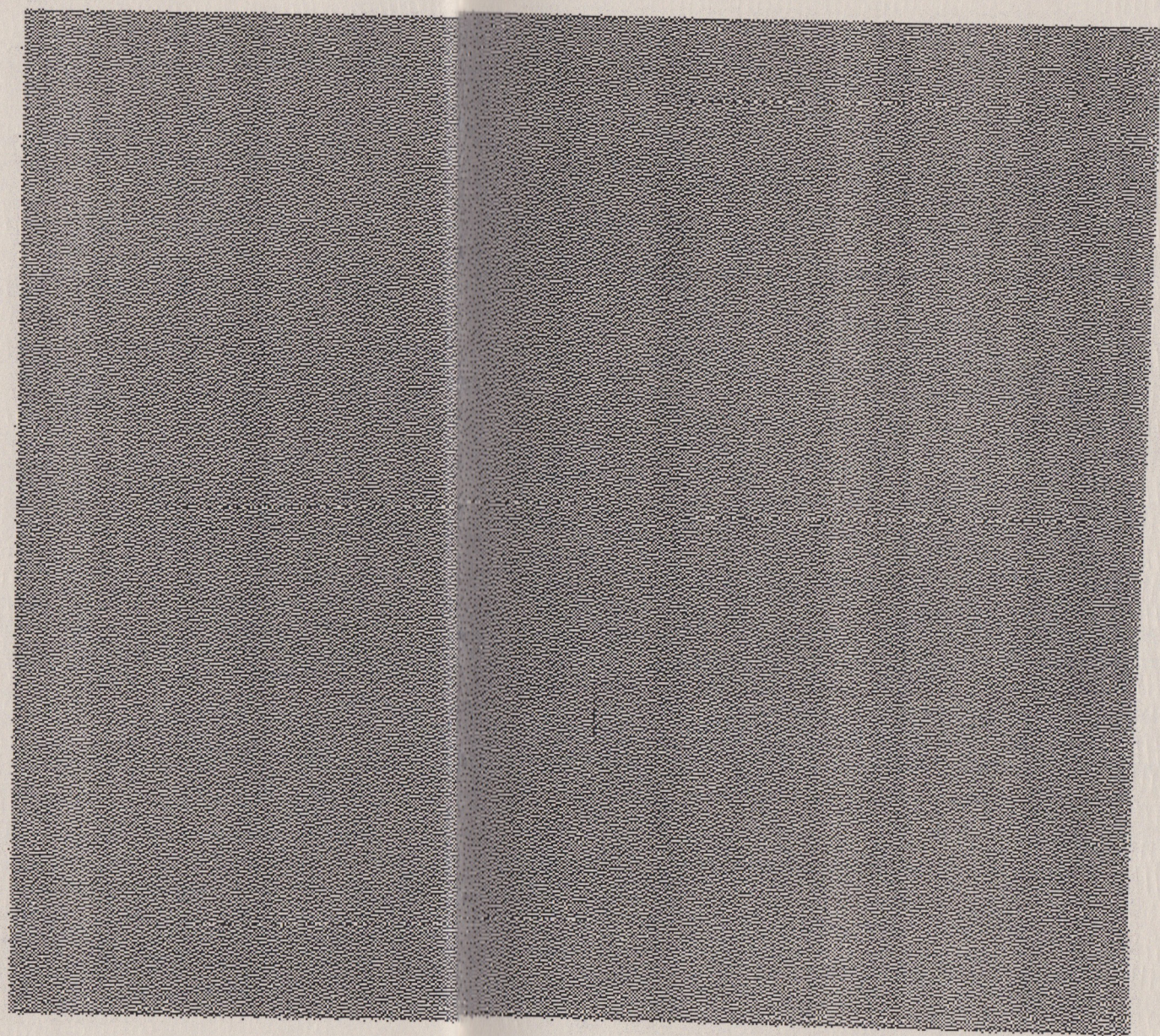
A gloss of tears begins to well up in the eyes.

Squeezes HE tightly and fixes the eyes up towards the imaginary spot on the ceiling as the three words are absorbed one by one with a devastating puncture. Rapidly deflating, SHE confirms the sense felt last night and this morning that something was wrong.

SHE tenses the body, braced for more.

Recognising resoundingly that the damage was done in the preamble, SHE's hitherto certain heart is uprooted, floating, lost. SHE is left caught between a slow motion body and a super-speed mind that has already mustered the presence to demand of itself that the damage and detritus will be made recoverable. SHE awaits the heart's knotty, unravelled, misplaced mess as it lands heavily back inside the body with a thud. SHE waits for HE to speak.

(CURTAIN. End of ACT II.)



AT RISE:

THE ROOM is pitch black and empty of inhabitants.

THE ROOM

(PROLONGED SILENCE apart from the droning hum of the
air conditioning unit)

ACT III: Another Clean

Door thuds shut signalling the departure of SHE and HE.

Time has elapsed. THE ROOM has laid still for some time, now.

Following the final curtain of SHE and HE's inhabitation, the physical artefacts contaminated by the memory are swiftly banished from THE ROOM by the cleaning staff of a hotel. What is removed from THE ROOM is washed, ironed, thrown away, or replaced. What remains physically fixed inside THE ROOM is wiped, sprayed, suctioned, stripped and sanitised into a neutral state. All efforts are made to re-stage THE ROOM's ephemera into an order identical to the way in which SHE and HE first encountered it.

Where the memory of THE ROOM ends for SHE and HE, raw material for future scripts unfurls for THE ROOM, contributing towards a constellation of human experience played out within the walls. THE ROOM's embodied experience is one of many disjointed acts which it weaves and rearranges into non-linear, thematic assemblages, much as one could gaze at the random presentation of night's star-scattered sky and draw any number of formations to their own design. THE ROOM cannot gaze out to stars it cannot see. Rather, it peers inside to the souls which embody its own cosmos within the six flat faces of its geometric constitution.

The dust particles inside THE ROOM, sent erupted into the air during the last cleaning process, settle down into yet another random composition.

THE ROOM waits.

(CURTAIN. End of ACT III and end of play.)

