

Susanna Space

Absence No. 4

Violet print against a field of white, heavy cotton, seams just so, the metal zipper running down my small back that she slides to the hook —

Only I don't remember that, don't recall her cool fingertips, can't see two of us in a bedroom, morning pressing against the windowpanes. Can't quite feel the hush of the maple leaves suspended, a thousand outstretched hands.

And yet I see, do you? Two of us, her hair falling riverish against her collarbone, my downy limbs beneath stiff cotton. She is saying *close the door* or *open it* or *ask Daddy* or *where is your brother* or *yes it's time now*.

Who can say what passes between two bodies? Like the moon and its foolish devotion to this hurtling sphere. The weight of cotton against flesh. *Yes*, she is saying to me. She is watching herself, isn't she? A length of fabric unspooled, silhouette overlaid on summer's rich patterning.

And farther behind a field of blanched New England sky, that absence, hollow pause between dreams where memory slips into place.

I hear her, do you? A single note suspended, a seed hungry to sprout. The zipper's metal teeth. Saying *come*. Saying *now*.