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**Written in the hidden pattern of all these uncertainties
and inconsistencies, she had seen her future.**

It is a painting, just half finished, so that the outlines of the houses are ghostly, and the hills suggest themselves in a few, impatient strokes.





Unfinished or not, this was how the painting would always be.



It occurred to her that this moment, when she saw herself exactly this way - unsmiling, pre-occupied, just that raise of eyebrow, just that twist at the edge of her mouth - was past, and gone. It was only a moment on her uninteresting face, and she had wasted a whole night over it, a night of far more exceptional moments taking place all over the city.





There was this sound, shhk shhk shhk. She was watching boys on skateboards, swooping through the concrete basin of a skatepark, flying up over the edge, posing for a second, bodies arched, boards touches between feet and hands, the the descent. Shhk shhk shhk. They moved from one side to the other with hypnotic swing of a pendant, and she watched.

Shhk shhk shhk.

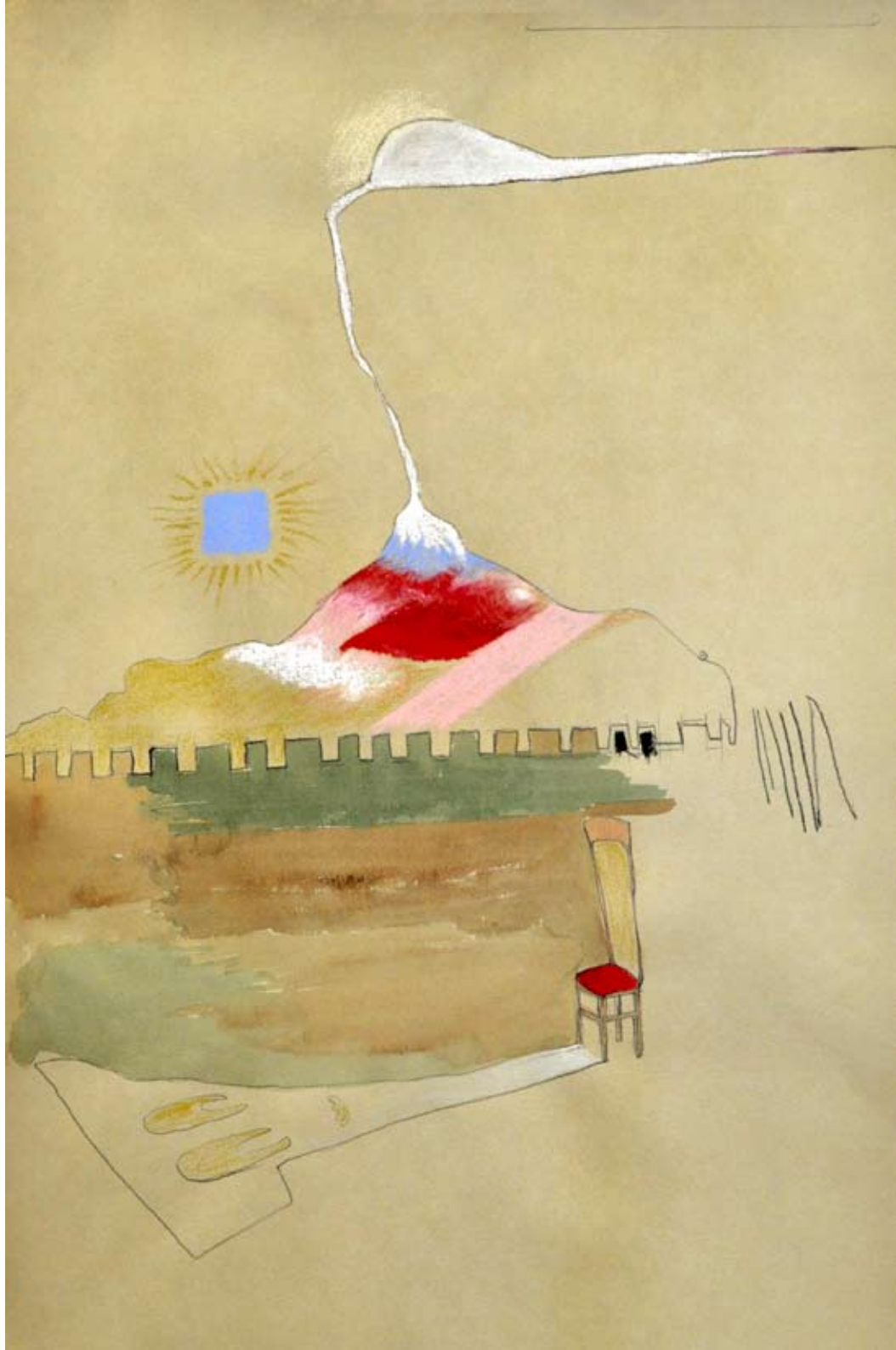


There was a small parade of kitchen built along one wall of a corridor. Above the sink, the orange curtains were drawn against the day. There was a window above her head, too, orange curtains. They went all round the walls of this small room, a protest march of hideous curtains, bringing upon ye orange light, a grotesque parody of sunshine, thicker and unhealthy.

The rain had stopped. Her stomach cramped and gnawed, empty and obstreperous. She stood up, and smoothed down the t-shirt, which had an advert for American bubble-gum on it, and she opened all of the curtains in the room.



**He tried to kiss her mouth, but she was so thirsty, so dry, that she thought she would just consume him if he did this, she would suck out all the moisture from his body, just by osmosis, and he would shrivel up, like winter in a time-lapse film, and then he would just be a desiccated relic, lying on top of her. Like an old shrivelled banana skin.
In the orange room.**





She pressed her hands up against the large picture window, which took up the prow of the caravan, the whole length of the bench on which she was kneeling. The window felt real, and she pressed her cool hand to her forehead, which was real as well. She went to the door, and stepped outside in her bare feet.

Text excerpts from the short stories "In Catterline" and "This is not the worst place I have ever woken up in" by Morven Crumlish