

—Somebody's falling

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I'm sitting on a plastic chair in the dark.

I can see lines of light around where the windows are every time a draft makes the blackout blinds breath.

Every ten to fifteen seconds another picture appears on the white painted wall ahead of me.

The pictures come from the whirring projector on the stand behind my right shoulder. The projector makes a ker-chunk noise with every new frame, another picture appears, cutting a relief into the solid wall.

Reflected light falls back into the room revealing a class of students all staring up at the makeshift screen.

The students are in various states of boredom, their heads are tilted up at the light but their bodies are slouched individually into the comfiest positions their chairs afford, positions as close to lying down as possible. One young man who is not looking at the screen is intently doodling in a notepad on his chair's fold down writing rest, the slide pictures are reflected in the two lenses of his rectangular framed glasses.

Our tutor, Chris, is standing, occasionally pac-

ing, the remote control cord trails and flicks behind him in the way a crooners microphone lead does as they amble around on stage waiting for the instrumental to finish. His pacing and the droning projector fan provide the only movement of air in the room, it is stifling hot and the drift towards sleep is in earnest.

Chris, marking time with his carousel of slides asks, 'what does anyone think of this?' The question casually murmured into the airless dark slips through the vents between sleep and waking. The words enter my consciousness as though spoken by the voice in my head, echoing just out of reach in various remote chambers before ringing alarm in my brow. I answer 'it's terrifying,' uncertain why I can hear myself out loud.

'Yes it is, isn't it,' says Chris, his voice rhythmic, emotional, soft, disturbed, suddenly tender...

'Is that someone falling?' I ask, looking at the glowing wall.

The room is lit up by an old black and white documentary photo from the American depression years. A horizontal figure is mid way on a descent, five floors and more to the ground, flapping

clothes, skirt and jacket and the body lying so still in them. She is falling past lines of regular blank windows outside an imposingly high and opulent government building. My question is unnecessary, the answer is more than evident, I feel a bit annoyed for stating the obvious, strangely it feels disrespectful to her.

'Uh huh,' says Chris; he clicks onto the next slide unwilling to indulge my feeble conversation further, which is far more like him than his uncharacteristic confession of feeling from a few seconds ago.

The class and I return to the dark, it's still stifling hot and more than a few have closed their eyes.