

Video 1 , caption text

Why did I finally ask her? Her silence was always there, absolute and unchanging. It was just another facet of our relationship, our reality. Like her probing gaze, or her jarring sense of humour, or her habit of tripping over certain words. Then, something shifted. I found myself returning, again and again, to the question of who she was, before she came here. I was drawn, inexorably, towards her silence, and the rupture that must have preceded it.

At some point, we were sitting at a café. I realized that this was my chance. I needed to ask her. My pulse hammered and my palms were slick. I stirred my coffee, smoothed my clothes, and adjusted the position of my notebook on the table. I endlessly formulated and re-formulated phrases. I don't think she ever said: "I don't want to talk about it," or "don't ask me." Still, I seemed to be inching towards some brink, or precipice. I felt a surge of vertigo.

I took a breath and cleared my throat. Then I launched into my halting, self-conscious questions.