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Holding Pattern

No one speaks on the other end of the line.
There must be some sort of holdup.
The kind where you have to wait,
not the kind where someone is getting robbed.

It seems we're in a holding pattern.
When all I hear is tinny music
or the sighing fuzz of static I think
of all those out there holding their phones

like plastic and glass monuments
to evanescence, holdovers from
an age of relics and shrines.
What we most love we carry or cling to—

babies, of course. Young lovers in the park
hold hands. Index of connection
whose impermanence spells sorrow.
To have and to hold. From Old English

haldan, meaning to tend sheep,
later meaning to cherish.
Hand-held devices stashed in holdalls.
Cigarettes, barely held, drifting ash.

Fingers, in their way, recount stories
unawares, day after day, important
and less so, of things sifted, written, gripped:
most of life a gauzy memory

of what hands have done, what held,
what between palms or arms
was lost or won. To raise one's hands is to say
you are defenceless, you hold nothing but air

and maybe in emptied hands hope
that, thus disarmed, you might somehow disarm.
It's advised in such moments to think
back to others less fraught. Like that time

on the back of his bike, riding out to the farm.
Hold on, he said, rounding the turn,
hold on tight, meaning, it's in this way
you will come to no harm.

