

at what distance does it stop

I meet my ex in the hushed elegant lounge
of the Imperial Hotel it is his gift
to me swimming in his satisfied smile
I've forgotten how large his hands are how
delicate re-shaping a cocktail umbrella
while he talks about his daughter
four years old now so cute
(must have met her just after I left '78 maybe)
he starts to laugh at a memory of her unthinkingly
undoes the buttons of his suit adjusts his tie
I sit back in my jeans and sneakers
too aware that I'm not dressing up for him
but taking care of this other self I want him to see
I tumble on about my new husband how he
(did I really say this) shares the housework equally
it's equal pay in Australia now there's Women's Lib too
(did I say I was in charge or just want him to think that)
and both of us have government jobs
of course he knows his teeth are very white his smile
wide so you work Saturdays too like in Japan
none of that bullshit batting
away his slightest dig at anything Australian
I like the way I can make him laugh now

at what distance does it stop

almost worth my five days in and out of telephone cubicles

at the back of *kissaten* trying to still my trembling fingers

loud catchy American rock beating at the glass

run run run run runaway

I wonder what I feared most

not knowing or knowing and letting go

the eyes at the back of my head know this