

(A FORTRESS #1)

Work has ceased on the fortress and yet it remains unfinished; its roof a mess of slats and tarpaulin. I just realised. I had just finished a wash after a long lie-in. I placed my towel upon the rack and for a long time was lost in a reverie, looking out of the window and down into the garden. There was no hammering. I got dressed and marched down through the long avenue of trees and through the dew wet lawn to the fortress. It must have been only the day before that I had passed close by (never too close! One wouldn't want to disturb the children!) and the place had been a hive of making, shifting, sawing and banging. Perhaps there is something of the sadness all half-finished buildings seem to exude in the rain but now it is as though it has been long ago abandoned. A saw lies on a woodpile, a box of rusty nails, a mess of rope. I wonder what has happened to them all, to all the children. I remember thinking about the Pied Piper. Maybe the holidays are over? Maybe they have sealed themselves up in there forever but that would fail to account for the roof. Does the fortress hide a secret? But of course. Secrets kept in adulthood are nothing in comparison to the secrets kept as a child. But what secrets? One could take one's pick. Perhaps there is a jewel at the centre, a presence amongst the trees. The facing away of the children is mysterious enough, as though they are tuned in to some new wavelengths: neither this world nor any other. And turned towards what? Does the fortress constitute a tribute to the sun? Or to the wood itself? I walk quickly back to my room in a strangely nervous state. I have not felt like this in a long time. I recognise that. I can read the signs and I know it will pass. I feel that if this is the point of abandonment then perhaps there is a chance that I can also move on even though I too am only half formed, half finished. Yet I am still standing and, I believe now, will continue for some time to do so. I know the two women next door are sleeping as I'm sitting on my bed and leafing through the pages.