This is a Photograph not Taken

Here—in the space, at the bottom of the page—is a photo I had wanted, but did not take. At first the cellophane covering the white void glints harshly, glaring under the light;

then, as I focus it duplicates the brilliance of the sun against Dover’s chalk cliffs. If I stare long enough I can almost see the glimmer of wet gravel on the bench and there in the background, the grey in a man’s hair. He is sitting on a green bench on the promenade, his silver tabby stretched out on a pushcart filled with his belongings. The package of crisps he eats crinkles brightly in this image I have of him reading (a book that someone had tossed in the rubbish because its spine was broken). I can’t make out the title or even know if it’s fiction.

It’s difficult to say, what I remember accurately, or what distortions memory like the angle of a camera creates.

(Weeks later, I will sit on a park bench beside the North Saskatchewan River pat my dog, and pretend to read. There I am alone in a picture that does not exist).

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