Secret Elephant

He lives in a box under the couch. Each day he emerges for cocktail hour; we notice he's grown fairly skilled at placing an olive in the bottom of each martini. One good thing about a secret elephant: no one talks about it. Another good thing? He doesn't weigh enough to break the table.

Lately we've been remarking how we should really find another elephant to keep him company. We think he's lonely. The fine trumpet of his voice ricochets from the plaster of the walls, echoes from the ceiling. Our cats don't know what to do with the wailing issuing from this fist-sized being. It seeps into our eardrums, fills the minutes when we mute the television turned on to keep the plaintive cry at bay. In case you're wondering, elephants do eat peanuts. That's not a myth.

And peanut butter. Which succeeds in muffling his call, slurring the spaces between syllables and what, presumably, are vowels. One afternoon watching the nature channel, we happen upon a documentary on African pachyderms. The elephant in our room catches the tail end of this chronicle, notes that the elephants on the screen are precisely his size, and takes off running. At the moment the impact with glass seems inevitable, we scoop him up, hold his fast-beating body still against ours until he's quiet.

He grows calm, and we never speak of it again. Neither do we turn to that particular program. Instead, he learns to take new tasks in stride, jostling the silver bullet of the shaker until the martinis are ready to fill our glasses. In the mirror of its side, twinned elephants clasp the barrel in a cold embrace.