

## On

At the end of the street you swing round. North rails against south. You forget that the roads sometimes slide without putting up road cones to alert the pedestrians. You are warned when the pavement is damp but not when it curves imperceptibly back in on itself. Your house is the only house on the street. There are other windows, other doors with bodies passing in and out of them: computer sprites, filler, extras in dreams, eyes to be avoided, potential conflict, the wind around a shuttlecock.

If you are asked to map the journey you cannot do it but at each junction you pause, you look both ways, and you make the choice that seems most familiar. In this way you are able to reach the centre daily. You follow the line of the water. Each time you cross the water you press your thumb on the button of your clicking machine. One. Two. You try to remember these numbers; they help to denote the places you have been.

In your designated kitchen you discover three knots in your left bra strap and wonder what is was you wanted to remember. You do not remember. As you untie the knots a memory loosens. A plaque of a picture of the rising sea. A whale. A heron's beak. Seven harpoons over a doorway teach you about the bank accounts of your ancestors. You speculate. As did they.

Every road is called King Street. However, sometimes the arm of the 'k' or the tail of the 'g' has flaked away. These tiny failures become your landmarks: a car with a flat tyre, a dead body that has not yet been brushed away.

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*The city-dweller can be oblivious of time on one of the many cafe terraces, or run like a hare to post a letter in the box on the back of a rapidly vanishing tram. The city-dweller can amuse themselves on the dance-floor of a chic nightclub or sit quietly behind a beer in a shabby pub with sand on the floor. They can live happily in the suburbs amid steel and concrete, but be fascinated by the old city, perhaps by a door that creaks open on to a hidden courtyard.*

## On

You do not rise from your bank. Lower back curved as a ladle waits for content. The sun shines, the cloud covers. You check the forthcoming weather, predict the hours, watch slashes of rain crab-slide over the map. Motorbikes snore freely along the horizontal, visiting employers, those owed, the recognisably sick. You are in trouble because you slowed on an uphill gradient. Hard to get kickstarted when you slouch alone.

You log onto anything within clicking distance: 17 ways to motivate yourself to do great things. The doorbell rings and your heartbeat shudders. Your body electric-shocks itself into a more constricted freeze-frame pose. Don't go to the window. Don't stick your expectant, unsuspecting head into the line of eyesight. Hold a glass, walk to the kitchen. Try to continue holding it. Wash the dishes, go to the toilet, carry your phone, get a drink. Time resumes its pattern of voices being heard outside on the pavements. Leaves twinkle, cacti grow unseen. You check your phone for a flashing light, for any kind of sign. You tidy the things from the table. Plump the cushions. The wind picks up, the curtain moves. It's not as bad as earlier, you are more prepared now. You put on fresh socks after stepping in a shower-old patch of damp in the bathroom. You think about going outside. You wait. You think about it.

## Master (stream)

I have no airport, no guided busway. I have no tram network. To get to the left foot, you have to go all the way up the right leg, past the thigh, and skirt around the you-know-what before heading south down the left leg to reach your final destination. My body parts are not integrated. You'd think, in this day and age, that there would be more connections. I hardly ever bring my hands and face to visit you anymore; we are like distant strangers. Often it's just my feet that pay attention and, on those rare yet raucous familial get-togethers, my pelvic bone and/or knees.

## On

The shell of the city curls around. A snail's back. If you follow the road in you eventually tend toward the tourist trade, looking at isolated sections of the looping whole number and saying the word 'one' again and again.

A shell is a house. A shield is a child's name. To pad is to walk. To give someone work is to have them take it away.

I hold for you. I hold it here. You hold it well. I hold this city. I am holding this sentence under this bridge, in between here. I grip it, I get it. You start with the big nouns, working your way deep inside to the elementary particles. Learn the words 'up' and 'down' and 'elephant' and 'strange'.

You sleep through the winter, the quickening pace of sunsets habitually taking your breath away. There are four degrees of pleasure. There are adjectives that describe people and adjectives that describe food. Watch for the reactions of the waiter in the nice shirt.

## Attachment

I have decided to raise my village out of poverty by launching a new budget airline. It offers a differentiated package, which I believe to be serviced quite well by the impeccable purple logo. Flights will be as cheap as 1 rupee. Everybody can afford 1 rupee! Even the boy selling beer to the dune-hopping tourists of the Rajasthani desert can afford 1 rupee. Even the boy with his broken back and bumpy palms. When his sack of beer is empty and his back unbroken he can store it in the overhead lockers or under the seat in front of him during take-off. Everybody can afford 1 rupee! Why should everyone else fly and not we? I finally came to realise my purpose on this fine planet, to literally lift people out of poverty and into the sky. Now my people can visit other villages at a fraction of the cost and in a fraction of the time. It is absurd to think people are still travelling on trains.

## On

At the end of the street you turn left onto the pavement, cross, take the first right. Follow that road but please remember that it is not as straight as it may seem. If this doesn't get any easier, stay on the pavement until you reach the canal. *Do not cross the canal*, but you know that. Check your pedometer. How many steps has this been? Canals do not flow like rivers. It is not so easy. You could be walking backwards and you wouldn't even know it, not with the clouds pissing around like that. Man-made items are often traps. The way once-dark cities now light up the roads at night. If the step-count is drastically out, then this is not the same canal and you must have crossed one without noticing while you were singing the choruses of songs you feel you ought to remember.

Find the nearest church spire.

You are lost but your identity is still intact. Ask the sprites questions in a regional accent. Puff out your chest, pull your shoulders out and forward. Walk like you are carrying a large wooden beam. You should never look at the map while out walking, it is an admission of defeat.

## Effects

I sleep with as many people as I can, in bed, at night, bodies piled up on bodies. Even when the days are long and we can all see what we are doing, we still prefer to rest our limbs on other limbs. Research has been conducted that suggests we should all be lying on top of one another and rolling over in unison. A half-turn to the left, a half-turn to the right. We keep our socks and knickers on so as not to spread disease. We change the sheets once a week. Whoever is in bed first fluffs up the pillows for all the others, fills the glass of water by the side of the bed. They scoot to the far edge, up by the crudely painted wall (off-magnolia corners, clamourings of paint where we once held the brushes tight and squeezed), where they think warm thoughts and hopefully in this way encourage a slight rise in overall mattress temperature. I want a big family and a small house with no heating. I want us to need things.



## On

You awake to the sound of thunder. You awake to a banging coming from the corridor. You awake to the sound and smell and fluidity of one of your co-sleepers having a bad dream. You awake to rain. You cancel your plans and you do not go outside. Instead, you take photographs of the tops and backs of the cupboards that belong to your apartment. You raise your arms high above eye-level or push your camera into the parts your head is too fat to reach. You print out these photographs on your personal print-making machine and tape them to the eye-level or head-width surface closest to the area thus far un-eye-reached. In this way you come to terms with your immediate environment. In this way you learn how many steps to take in the dark, when to retreat. The sun comes out, the photographs bleach. Your efforts have been wasted. You do not have the time or the routine to regularly re-photograph the cupboard tops and the small spaces behind, between. As such, you do not keep up-to-date with the ways in which these areas are constantly changing. The next time it rains a guest is with you in your apartment; they are about to leave but the rain keeps them there a little longer. They run a finger along the top of one of your cupboards and try to hide the disgust they feel.

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*The city offers its visitors one of the happiest combinations of activity and leisure to be found in Europe. In a remarkable way its attractions – bars, bookshops, canals, churches, concerts, museums, squares and nightclubs – flourish in a constant, cheerful atmosphere at once discreet, tasteful and charming. The city has a surprising uniformity – every district and corner really seems like a branch or twig from the same tree – but you will never be bored. It is enough to enjoy the separate pleasures and later, perhaps much later, reflect on the surprising spirit of harmony which infuses the memory. The secret, perhaps, lies in the planning.*