

Not Quite There Yet

by lisa rosenblatt

You're not late yet, but if you don't move now, you will be. You close the cover of your mac book, don't even finish the sentence you were working on or close down the file. What had been of the utmost importance, clutching at your concentration just a moment before has been banished from your mind in a flash.

You stand, go into the bathroom, left hand reaches methodically for the toothbrush, right for the paste and you squat slightly, appreciatively thinking, wow, since the sink has been mounted a bit too low for a normal standing position, I get to do a squat and strengthen my legs every time I brush. Glance into the mirror and feel your thighs burning as the paste becomes fluffy and you know you've done a decent enough job. Wipe away the toothpaste from your chin and ignore the drop that has landed on your shirt. Glance into the mirror again, wonder why those eyes staring back at you are the bearers of all the mysteries your life will ever hold. Every year of your fifty-four years suddenly screaming at you, from the fine lines around your eyes, the slight sag of skin to the left and right of your mouth and the deep furrow between your brows. The right eyelid sags, you picked off the scab when you were thirteen or fourteen that formed from the sunburn you got when you were visiting your grandmother in Florida and decided to absorb every last ray of sun, which turned you into a mass of blisters and red splotches.

Your backpack is ready, in the right-hand corner of the room; turquoise blue, speedo, you got it from the national team as part of the outfit for the swimmers at the world championships, Masters, mind you, when you went to Montreal. You're proud of the bag even though you had to pay for it yourself, at discount, still, makes you feel like you're doing this all for something more than your own

pleasure and sanity, some greater goal, some national mission or spiritual journey, for the team, even.

You grab the pack, throw it on the floor in the front room and pull on your jacket and gloves and face mask and helmet. When all clothes are zipped and adjusted, swing the pack onto your pack. It fits snugly over the thick winter jacket. The ski gloves are torn at the palm, repaired with silver duct tape, it is strong and the gloves are warm, still, you make a note that you should probably replace them although you know you won't.

Put your hip on the seat and your hand on the top bar of the old red bicycle that is hanging from a hook, dangling from the ceiling. The bike swings easily off of the hook, you settle down the back tire and then front, open the front door of the flat and wheel the bike out.

Hands on handlebars, you swing your right leg over the seat and start pedaling. At the corner take a right, you could choose one of a number of streets to cycle down, but decide to take Gentzgasse, just because. There is a sign, in rough translation it says, "Does anyone need a cleaning lady?" and you wonder well, does anyone really need a cleaning lady? What do they mean by need? Does it depend on the depth of the dirt in your home or the number of hours you work or have other things to do. Then you realize that it is an ad for a cleaning lady, as in, does anyone need one? A cleaning lady is being offered. By this time you have reached the bike path and have a flash of gratitude that you are able to cycle and that it is not raining or snowing and that you have passed through three intersections, all of them green, without having to stop and reached the canal where you are basically at the pool because even though it is still 7 or so km away, you do not need to share the road anymore with any drivers, just a few dog walkers on the bike path.

You get to the pool and lock your bike onto the gate. Pull off one glove, reach for the key card that will let you in, hold it up to the sensor and then quickly put your glove back on. You pass through the turnstile and still have to walk about 5 minutes before you get to the door letting you in to the locker rooms that attach to the pool, where they've put up a structure for the winter, an air inflated roof, like the kind over tennis courts. You glance at your watch. Practice starts in 5 minutes. You open the door and the warm air hits you, fogging up your glasses, you can't see a thing but you're warm and embraced by the echoing sounds of splashing and whistles. You walk carefully so as not to slide on the slippery wet floor.

