

Foghorn

I'm awake by a long, continuous horn. The vibrating sound appears to elevate the kitchen floor to knee high. I stand barefoot for a while before realizing my feet are cold. I have lost my socks somewhere under the blankets, during the night. I return to the bedroom and do a search and rescue, revering my mind's logic.

I find the pair on separate sides of my bed. I must have slept with my legs in a V. I finish putting them on, immersed by the recurring, extended horn sound. As a child I recall counting to one thousand in moments like this, whenever I felt loss of control and threatened. I have the urge to count to one. Instead, I breathe and peek out the window.

It is impossible to see the sea from where I stand, but enough to meet the fog covering the street and most of the trees. The orange Buick parked by my window is covered in ice, sanded like a frosty white cupcake. I can tell the asphalt is slippery. At this time of the year, walking on back alleys is always challenging. The city's quietness, though, is the highlight of the season. That's when I feel mostly myself, appearing and disappearing amidst the decay of winter.

Today is the first real cold morning since Christmas. I walk every day regardless of the weather. That's what I do. I relish the routine. I aim towards the bridge, near the dog beach. The smell of English bay is overwhelming. I know the area quite well. I sit further down to hear the waves, crashing against the sand – more likely little ones. The incessant horn is a novelty, invading my mind as the eye of strangers, making me unrecognizably human. I come back to reality when someone throws a stick to a dog and I hear the thump in the water, a respite of normal life.

I'm cold, as everything else around here. The dog comes out of the water carrying something larger than a stick in his mouth. I watch it a bit more attentively, curious and tempted to come closer. Esteban, the woman calls the dog. I haven't seen them around here before. It must be the Holidays, I think. The animal appears like a peacock, proud. The pair notices me for the first time, as though I'm the stranger, my face as stunned as theirs. The horn is no longer, and neither is the fog.

Is that yours? She asks me, accusatorily. The drone hanging from the dog's mouth is certainly not mine. Before exploding, I tell her politely no, though I think: do I really look like someone that can maneuver a drone? In any case, she seems relieved. It's ruined, she says, upset that the animal is eating away the plastic. It might be bad for him, I mistakenly utter, and she doesn't even bother to make eye contact.

Is she upset about the dog or that something like this could be found dead in the water? Well, it wasn't ever alive, I tell myself. Do you know whose drone is this? She continues, as though certain I'm part of the plot to destroy her and the canine teeth. I don't do drones, I reply, which sounds sarcastic but it's how I think. I only do walks, I affirm. She doesn't appreciate my answer. I don't even own a dog, I'm about to add, but her husband or whatever arrives carrying a baby and taking possession of the situation. The cold feels brisker at once. I keep on walking, thinking how paranoia can snap everybody at once, especially when one begins to speculate whether you really know anyone in your life deep down – let alone yourself. Not far, I find the remote plucked by a crow under a log. My unmovable fingers have a hard time to take the object away from the bird, forbidding it from choking to the bones.

The bones? I question myself, confronted by my own thinking. I ask the black fur: were you trying to eat away the bones from the data? It doesn't reply. It flies away from me as I dump the device into a recycling bin. Walking home, I recall the movie *Bacurau*, and the sudden possibility of being one of the bad Brazilians trying to erase Vancouver and the perfect family from the map. Wouldn't that be something? I smile, shaking my head by the things I'm able to produce and repress every other day, especially when it is cold, and I can barely breathe.