

Passage One

score for standing still in moving water

Find a sizable rock in the moving current. Approach slowly, and ask permission to rest on.

Find a still position and stay in it for as long as you are comfortable. Is there wind, sun, rain, cold chills?

Allow them through. Are there sounds? Moving water, hitting other rocks or the shore, wind in the trees, reeds or bushes. Are there any other sounds? Allow them through. Does your body feel the surface of the rock? Lean on, rest, become the rock and smoothen your edges.

Dear SYB,

The Donau is transforming my idea of home, my perception of time, ways of moving, inner thoughts and outer voice. My stream of consciousness flows uncontrollable along the waters of this subliminal waterbody. Days merge, the road winds. My thoughts of home anchor me. But which home? The one to the West or the one to the East? I am constantly moving but I also feel like I stay in the same place. My body is a rock drying up under the scorching sun, until it's rewetted by a heavy rainfall. The slow currents are carried eastward by the westerlies. The same currents, which began from a spring, to be born at a convergence site by the Breg and the Brigach at the land of Baren-Württemberg. A transformation takes place in the Black Forest; *toss a coin with your left hand over your right shoulder and see how the Mother points East*. The waters are shallow, narrow and brown. Ask for protection and guidance, and dip your hands into the source; *take water to your forehead, throat, heart and feet*. It's time to go. Small fish make their way downstream, exposed to the sunlight. I follow, down, through Bavaria, where the waterbody grows. She grows together with the Blau, the Wörnitz, the Isar, the Inn, the Ilz, and many more. Sometimes she hides and sinks underground, but eventually continues her search for the Black Sea. In a system of floodplains, peatlands, bogs, tributaries and river islands, she is tightly hugged by thick forests and people. Fallen branches help me cross overgrown paths. They keep my balance. Others keep my balance too and push me forward.

Stephan, Tine, Lou, the lady in the bakery in Geisingen, Ingrid and John, the Italian family from Turin, Christine, the lady boat driver, the guy on his porch in Kirchberg, Peter, Thomas and his dog Lotte, Alex on his pedal board on his way to the Black Sea, the truck driver from Bosnia, the Dutch couple I met in Beuron, Lionhart from Krems, Michael the ecologist I met in the Tullnerfelder Donauauen, the Irish pub owner and his bartender in Tuttingen, the lady before Vienna and her dog, Hugo, and Luisa, Kamilé and Thoma.

I carry my home on my back, and every day I take my home out, and in the morning I pack it back. My rooms are pockets and smaller bags. My roof is a poncho; my fireplace, a stove and socks. My hallways are roads and trails. My floor is grass, dirt, and asphalt. And through my window, everyday I see her, beside me, like a small serpent gaining scales every new day.

Like in a trance, completely surrendered to a non existent structure of a day, place and being, I follow. She murmurs next to me, taking me from her one side to the other, through her plains, valleys, forests, and on roads crossed by deer, beavers, dragonflies, Romans,

Vikings, pilgrims, farmers, armies and the Church. These roads, filled with blood, dreams and old magic, are now covered with bike lanes, hydropower plants, dams, and factories. They tame and cut the Donau in parts. Human influence doesn't allow for continuous flow, it obstructs it, in every way, at any cost. The countless floods over towns and villages have made people cautious, so they find ways to protect themselves from water.

In Haus im Tal, Ingrid told me: *Some people are absolutely terrified by the river, others stay on it all day.*

Power turbines scream underwater and fish don't have earplugs. Pipes and gates butcher the stream. Fish corridors, re-wilding habitats, and hydropower energy exist to balance the odds, but the odds have already been scaled, silted. I rest on rocks to seek solace and I hope the water smooths my edges. There, I soak in the day's heat. If I am lucky, tree shade and small snakes will cover my feet. You never know what will appear down the river; grazing sheep, boat signs, lonely fishermen, expensive yachts, canoes and sometimes swimmers in a torrent, pushing anything out in its way. But driftwood is all good and well; it might sprout downstream.

My mind is easing, slowing down, accepting change, uncertainty and craving time alone and the endless open road. I am only but a shadow made of water. I leak through the landscape and my sweet waters are searching for salt.

I began as a rock at the currents mercy, now I am turning smooth and round. Polished and ready to skip the surface, I make my way through the old Habsburg empire, entering the Slovak and Magyar lands.