

## It's no longer possible to map any distance

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They wander up the mountain through the forest. They slide in the mud and tumble alternately into a bed of ferns. Over them the eagle is hovering. Dusk has come. They've wandered since sunset. A thick mist is laying upon the surrounding mountains. On the top will be a flat plateau. They walk with distance between them, to preserve themselves. Even if something was to interfere with their will: spirits, slides, winds - they would still own their distance. Their distance is the silly condition of their autonomy. Darkness grows and it becomes harder to see. They continue to walk without being able to see ahead. The eagle coughs. They slip, get stuck in the mud, grease into it. They feel the spiderwebs on their distanced faces. Their bodies shake with hunger, exhaustion and cold. Something screams in the dark, suffering as an old woman. A witch, Asa says and shivers. But we're there soon, she says to calm herself. According to my calculations we should be on the top within this hour. But they've both lost their sense of hours. They had hoped to reach the plateau in daylight. Now they stand still for a moment to hear the scream echo in the valley. The sound is thrown back and forth between the mountain walls. Nothing has the transparency of day. The darkness is opaque and empty of calculations. It is a deadly and moist darkness. Upon them the oval moon shines yellow like an eye. When will we arrive, Nāhi asks. They can't see each other's eyes. Their blindness sedates them. They climb up through the forest in mud to their knees. They are approaching the tip of the mountain. They reach it jubilant. Simultaneously they hear the scream once again. It comes from close by. Slowly they walk out upon the plateau. They see two luminous orange dots hanging in the black air. The dots are small but transmit a dazzling sharp beamlight. Slowly the two dots grow larger and the orange rays hit them. "Stand still", they tell each other. They are fearful of their own strangeness. They hear the enormous paws on the crisp snow while everything turns orange. The animal's white outline grows visible as a glory surrounding its eyes. "It must be the eurasian lynx", they whisper. With that, the lynx transmit a scream that makes their ears bleed. The animal approaches them slowly, seductively slow. The plateau is illuminated by orange. They must close their eyes to not get blinded. It's no longer possible to map any distance.

When they finally open their eyes, they have night vision. They stand at two thousand five hundred meter height. Their vision pulsates and covers the valley with orange. Over them the eagle is hovering. It has wings as wide as their bodies melted to one. Their hearing is so sharpened that they hear the rocks fall from the slope three mountains away. They have awakened and don't know where they're from. They feel the new length of their hair. As they take the first step, they inhale.

They've reached the river from which Nähi originates somewhere between Russia and Iran. They have wandered for two days and have reached the river village in the valley, where the houses are made from cracked mountain rocks. They live with Nähi's dead grandparents. Mamani is a riverspirit, she rinses herbs in a stone vessel and the water runs through the house with a loud flowing. She walks back and forth as a stream. Babayi is a rock spirit, he chops in mountain rocks. It makes a dry, hollow rhythm that echoes through the valley. He sits down on the terrace and watches the mountains engage with the moving skies. He keeps sitting like that, motionless for days. They become shrouded in the grand silence Nähi originates from. For days they lie upon the handwoven carpet and look into the silence. They look at each other for too long, disappear, become pure spirits. When they realize, they stand back up and start to wander with distance. They can't escape their senses any longer. Their senses are open. They're frightened of their own capacity.

They wander towards a ghost town to pray at its ancient shrine. As they enter the village they meet the first ghost dog. It's small and not unfriendly. By the entrance of the shrine they see the sign "no women allowed" and so they stand still and redeem it with laughter, which attracts the gigantic ghost dogs. The ghost dogs have awakened each other from a thousand year sleep. The smell of women awakes them. They have been revealed and are now surrounded. It barks in their ears. Is that themselves, their own barking? They cry. The ghost dogs will eat them, they have starved for a thousand years. It's not easy to say how many women stand in front of the shrine, only the ghost dogs can know; not with the unambiguous answer of calculation, but with the uncertain consciousness of senses. Nähi says: "slowly, quietly", Asa says: "slowly, quietly". Slowly and quietly they leave the shrine surrounded by fear only of each other, while the ghost dogs hang in their skirts by their teeth. After they've returned to the mountain path, they have this feeling that the ghost dogs have eaten all of their dresses, but it's not possible to see. Their senses feel naked like animals.

They search for a new way to love, wander and wander, but find only the hollow insides of mountains, an absence that can make them throw themselves over the slopes - then it's easier to map the uninhabited regions and disappear into survival. Their survival is autonomous, headstrong, fragile. They impossibly force matter to separate.

They discover that time has stayed on the opposite mountainside. It is them who have left it there. They must learn what time will be now that it isn't. Some have thoughts that flutter and spread, decentered, dissolved in the blankness of the mountains, an outer life. That is the life of cats and dogs. Many live only inwardly. To wake and use their new vision they must live on the threshold between outer and inner. If you only live the outer or inner life it is easy to trip over the slope. Somewhere in the middle they will meet. Like the lynx they are open though empty and awake. It's hard to manage the mountain with its bears, cats, spirits and eagles. They must get eaten. They must surrender to the nearby chance of losing their balance. They must be open to unforeseen attacks.

They leave the river over the suspension bridge. The ropes break and the bridge gives in beneath them. They will never think about what happened at the plateau. The wood lets go of their feet and they are guided through the layers of air into the river. The water is ready to drink. Tears flow from their orange eyes towards their original sea of tears. The river is the only place in the country that has never been conquered and it will never be negotiated. They've lost the ones they sense among them; what gathers them around the still existing is absence itself.