

clothes from above, his face and rifle, but all else around him remains black. All is quiet. He looks up. The light exposes him, but he does not care. To glance outside the forest, be it the moon above, gives him a sense of security. He is standing on the lit path. His heart is beating. He waits. His stomach hurts. He breathes in and out. Maybe I was tricked by my own senses, he thinks. Maybe there is nothing here in the woods except me and my own imagination. He closes his eyes. He can sense the glow of the moonlight touching his retina.

A rustling interrupts the quietness. Just for a moment. And silence. He looks down. He tries to figure out what could have caused the sound. And where it came from, visualising the distance. All is calm. He holds his breath. He waits, but the clearing remains empty and quiet. Occasionally a breeze swishes through the trees, that is all. He is exhausted.

Dusk sits inside the forest, between the trees, under each leaf. He realises how long he spent standing on the path, poised. He decides to move on, pushes one leg forward. And again, his boot touches the dried leaves. He can hear them crack and break under the weight of his body. Now he walks. He has been on this path several times before, and he knows by heart each bend and stumbling block. Usually, when he returns home from the hide, where he regularly spends the late hours of the day observing the surroundings, the lack of light does not bother him too much. He leaves the grassy part

behind, and crosses another small clearing overhung by large fir trees. To reach the door of the house he has to walk for about twenty-five minutes to the edge of the forest, then cross the field, from where the lights of the kitchen window will be visible. He will grab the iron handle, open the gate, enter the porch and hear the door fall back into the shutter. He is on the path setting one foot in front of the other. He is convinced that each step is audible in every corner of the forest. Crack, crack, crack. The hair on the back of his neck keeps reminding him to focus on any sound behind him, something is out of place tonight.

A stare from somewhere follows his steps while he walks away from the clearing. By now dusk has set in and the twilight surrounding him makes silhouettes out of objects. To find out what has disturbed him, he decides to stop abruptly and listen. Crack, crack, stop. In the moment of taking his last step, he can clearly hear a rustling and breaking of twigs several metres behind him. Alert, aware of not being alone in these woods, without moving, without turning his head, he thinks: To just run home as quickly as possible is no good – whatever is there behind me might be much faster and attack. To try and climb up the closest tree is no good either as climbing pines in the darkness is not an option. And undoubtedly, to turn around and point my rifle towards whatever there is, could provoke a situation so unpleasant that I will not consider further.

FOREST

For him, the only plausible option appears to pretend he has not heard a thing, and move on, step by step. Several twigs and leaves later, still with the gaze resting on his back, he decides to stop again. He has been listening to the sounds of the forest for hours and hours over the years, he knows the din of how leaves and twigs echo when a fox, a deer, a wild boar passes by, and he is certain that he will be able to identify what follows him. Crack, crack, stop. Again the rustling behind him on the path. Fairly close, maybe fifteen metres away. Crack, crack. Silence. What is it?

This sound is no fox or deer. He heard steps – one, two. Two legs. Or maybe more. He breathes in. Too many thoughts are rushing through his head, but frozen and unable to act in any other way, he moves a leg forward slowly, then the other, and walks on. He walks, does not stop. Walks and walks. Ahead of him the dim light shimmers onto the passage leading to yet another clearing. He will have to cross the open gap, find the path again and once he is inside the shadows of the woods on the other side of the dell, he might eventually decide to turn his head. He can already see the gentle reflection of the moon on the wet grass out there. A pale light is surrounding him. His heart is beating. He walks and walks. The distance between him and the clearing shrinks, but still it feels infinitely far. With each step he tries to restrain the wish to run. Finally, he reaches the glade. He steps out into the opening. And stops.

FOREST

At once he realises that the moon is lightening his clothes from above, his face and rifle, but all else around him remains black. All is quiet. He looks up. The light exposes him, but he does not care. To glance outside the forest, be it the moon above, gives him a sense of security. He is standing on the lit path. His heart is beating. He waits. His stomach hurts. He breathes in and out. Maybe I was tricked by my own senses, he thinks. Maybe there is nothing here in the woods except me and my own imagination. He closes his eyes. He can sense the glow of the moonlight touching his retina. A rustling interrupts the quietness. Just for a moment. And silence. He looks down. He tries to figure out what could have caused the sound. And where it came from, visualising the distance. All is calm. He holds his breath. He waits, but the clearing remains empty and quiet. Occasionally a breeze swishes through the trees, that is all. He is exhausted. Dusk sits inside the forest, between the trees, under each leaf. He realises how long he spent standing on the path, poised. He decides to move on, pushes one leg forward. And again, his boot touches the dried leaves. He can hear them crack and break under the weight of his body. Now he walks. He has been on this path several times before, and he knows by heart each bend and stumbling block. Usually, when he returns home from the hide, where he regularly spends the late hours of the day observing the surroundings, the lack of light does not bother him too much. He leaves the

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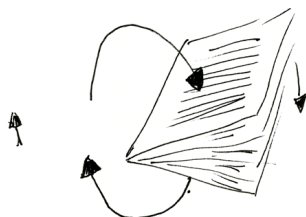
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the story continues over the spine from page 12 to 1.

The colophon is smaller in size and placed loose inside the publication (see next page), between page 10 and 11.

For my father

Published on the occasion of *Six Works* at The Return Gallery

Dublin, supported by Goethe Institute Dublin

Printed by Martin Sorg at Schlesener, Berlin. Edition 500

Thank you Kevin Kirwan

Daniel Gustav Cramer, Berlin 2010

ISBN 978-3-942911-00-9

