

I can't walk, I'm not self-reliant, nor do I speak clearly; but there are other things I can do, for instance I'm really good at looking, and looking isn't as straightforward as you'd think, yet the only people who know that are the ones who look for a very long time and very carefully, and to do that you've got to have time, like I do.

First you have to forget about yourself, exactly that: who you are and what your name is and so on, so that's already pretty hard, and then you've got to keep it up for a long while, the forgetting, and it's also important not to lunge at whatever you're looking at. You have to approach slowly, sneak up on it, sometimes wait it out for ages and be cautious, because only then do things become visible.

Of course I like looking at Łucja most. She's distinct, I can hear and feel everything clearly, because with other people I can't always, from time to time something's off. I shift a little in my chair and check if dad is spying on me, because to top it off you need to have peace – but he's not, he's in his room, working, I can hear his click-click, click-click-click.

I close my eyes and search for her, at first she just slips away from me, like trying to grab onto a wet bar of soap, but I am patience itself, I keep looking and finally there she is, and then I look even more and more, I look so long and hard that the distance finally vanishes, all the air, buildings, posts and people between us disappear, the streets and intersections disappear, all the differences between her and me disappear. Suddenly everything feels empty for a moment and then something, like a pigeon waddling on my skin, back and forth, hop-hop-hop, and I feel so lightheaded.

I open my eyes and I'm smarter, and suddenly I have many words, and I remember everything smoothly, not in scraps, and I observe Łucja, first from afar, and then from above and over her shoulder, and then from within. At first it makes my head spin when she leans forward, focused on what she's doing.

She got back earlier today. Some days she doesn't have afternoon classes, because it depends what performance she's in and so on, well anyway she got back earlier today and she probably won't stop by to see us because she did yesterday. She has all this time to herself and right now she's busy with her pointe shoes.

Pointe shoes are the most important object in my sister's life. When she still lived with us, she had this large plastic box where she kept them, always a few identi-

cal pairs, and she always went through them so quickly that dad had a Youllgivemeaheartattack.

Every dancer in the troupe has a favourite brand, and Łucja's are Freed's, size 5.5. One pair costs 320 złotych and lasts her two weeks, more or less. Now she gets pointe shoes from the theatre, three pairs a month, but since she likes the Freed's more than, for instance, Gay-nors, which are more durable and can last a month, fairly often she has to take care of them, meaning prepare them for performances. A few times a month she sits on her own in an armchair, like now, with her sewing kit spread out on her lap, and prepares a new pair for yet another week, and I with her.

Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



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