

ALEX LESLIE / from **Vancouver For Beginners**

Vancouver For Beginners #3—A Cyclist's Dream

I live for my bike, sleep with it, haul it over me, slopejoints, bones hollow as a bird's. Rainmonths drag a jacket over, spiny-tarped cave, the water ankles me, I lie cross-legged in the centre of a city drain. I see shadows of gulls in filigreed shoes, a season somersaults down the gutter, head over heels for archipelagos, puddles in the city's linked stomachs. Anchoring wobblecups of lamplight grease, I have this cage above me, this diagonal aluminum wing between my weather and cold, my blue eye spins like a weathervane, on its side my bike my lover tells time I ask it questions tick tock tock tock another finger crosses my eye, the moon drags down one more curtain. Day crawls with us, soldiers in our helmets, roads margined for our elbows, halogen handlebars sweep down riverbed slopes, at dusk the streets roam with slim-heeled cyclopes. We race this turbine, peel wings off rain. Six or seven nightfall I get lonely for it, math of its pedal at my hip, a bolted wrist held respectfully high. The thing above grows into you, limbs can perform any task. It's good exercise to stay awake during sleep. Dawn fingers me lightheaded, my bike filter prisms this wake, the sun hurls jackets packed with tin sparrows at my eyes. Pry it off, push we push off tuck the streets up deft, cars vanish me. Tie a tendon around False Creek for good luck, I will never be this bruised and free again.

Vancouver For Beginners #5—Fadeout

In deep fall we turn into ghosts or extend olive branches. Seasons clot us cluster us, husky with hair. Last summer's nightfighter bounces emails off our cloud armour, our shrug tectonic, streets shapeshifting under rain's snakework. Buildings rub their clayslipped chests together until winter. Until it lifts, vanish us. We surrender our genie coefficients to calendar art. Someone is painting murals on waterfalls again, someone is building a parking lot on a graveyard, someone is lacing branches in chainlink and planting a tree on a building to mean skyline. Our shoulders have rise to waterlevel in storms we assembled from junkyard pedigree. Nightly a horn sounds at the club corridor's left earlobe, freighter pendant belly-up, spiked sleeper hit mouthing oiled words. The police are raiding shopping carts again, eight jackets reach open armed across the intersection, crows stride the fingerbridges swing claws in eye-yellow rings around the loophole we crouch in. Around the peak of the house rain frames another peak. Half-shut our eyes guide us through the ocean cloud palindrome the slick watchstrap binding mountain to knee, weather is our tourniquet.