

# Excerpt from in-progress manuscript *Render*

Sachiko Murakami

sachiko.murakami@gmail.com

---

Sachiko Murakami is the author of *The Invisibility Exhibit* (2008), *Rebuild* (2011), and *Get Me Out of Here* (2015), all published by Talonbooks. As a literary worker, she has edited poetry for Insomniac Press and Talonbooks, worked for trade organizations, hosted reading series, organized conferences, sat on juries, and judged prizes. She has created several online collaborative poetry websites including [projectrebuild.ca](http://projectrebuild.ca) (2011), [whenihavethebodyofaman.com](http://whenihavethebodyofaman.com) (2013), and [figureoracle.com](http://figureoracle.com) (2014, with angela rawlings). She was the 2017 Jack McClelland Writer-in-Residence at the University of Toronto, and teaches creative writing at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies. She lives in Toronto.

## MINDMAP OF THE REAL WORLD

### COMOX STREET

I have amnesia. I come to and I am in an unfamiliar house watching a touching movie with strangers. I am surprised that it is so moving because it is a Disney after-school special. The lead male is attractive in a late-teenage way. Dark hair, rebellious, dangerous, but ultimately he cares deeply for the female lead. I get up to go after the movie ends and the strangers all snicker at me. I can't find my shoes. I get increasingly upset that I don't know where or when I am. The really heartbreaking moment is when they tell me it is November, not July as I had thought. Apparently they had found me on a slut-review website. I came over and fucked all of them in turn. I remember nothing.

### TENTH AND OAK

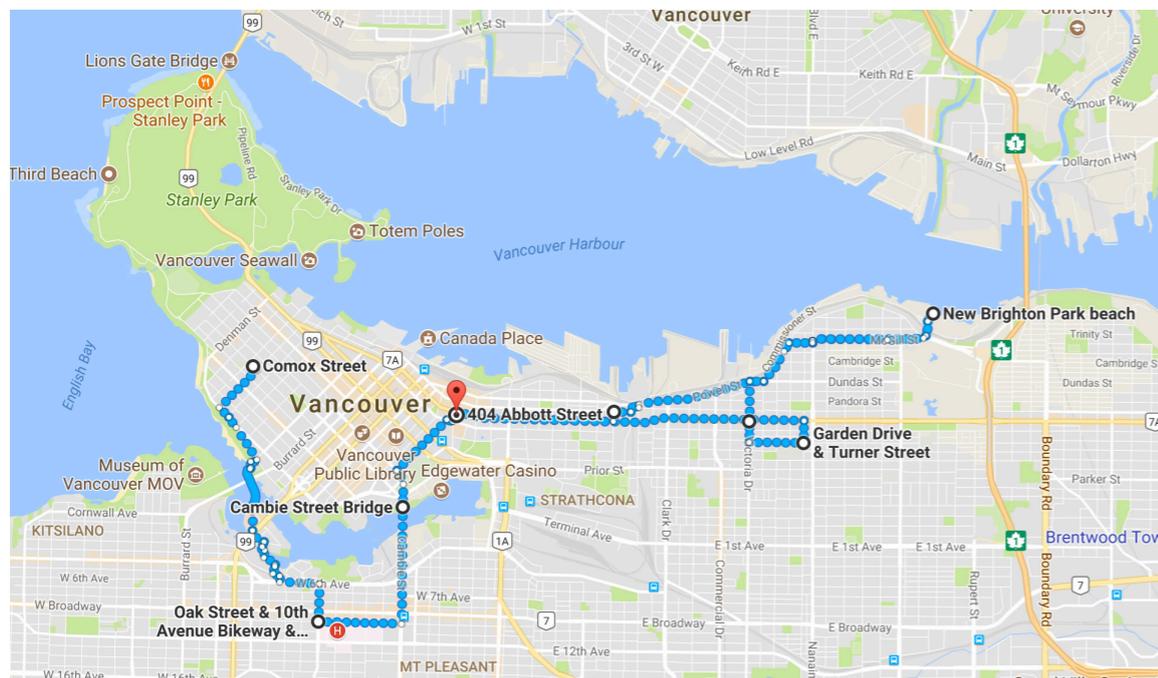
I am a man manipulating other men into giving me drugs. Lots of people are living in my house, using it as a movie set. I am high among familiar men, some of them mentors. I wake up, still dreaming, and find photos on my phone. Some are sexualized photos of children. I am confused and horrified. An investigation begins. We are, rightly, charged with child abuse.

### CAMBIE STREET BRIDGE

I am in a fantasy land where I feel peace. I make an impassioned speech about sunflowers to a swirling prophetic. She agrees to let me stay, and implies that my path will be paved with sunflowers, but I will have to slay the dragon. I set out on my journey. Then, without warning, long before the appointed time, the dragon descends. It is metallic, cruel, mocking. It tells me to go back where I came from. I try my hand at bravery and it eats me. I slosh around in its stomach. When I escape, I charge it again. It picks me up in its teeth and very rapidly flies with the intention of slamming me into a wall.

### CORDOVA AND CAMPBELL

I decide to work for my father at his store. He sits, as usual, in his office, watching a squirrel video on his computer that in the dream is erotic. He calls his business partner to confirm my rate of pay, \$19 per hour, which is four dollars more than he would pay my sister. I try to explain that she won't be able to do it because she has her own job now. I am stuck in a family business, unhappy, but my father is happy so I take my place at his side.



## NEW BRIGHTON PARK

I am dining with fashionable people. My water glass is full of frogspawn. I try to get some fresh water but it comes out of the tap sloppy and full of frogspawn. As it turns out, someone has cursed my water supply. I can barely choke down the slimy water but I am dying of thirst so I have to.

## HASTINGS AND VICTORIA

I win \$25 000 for a really good speech.

## TURNER AND SEMLIN

When we arrive at the airport, my sister and I are in line for the bus; we realize at the last minute that we had neglected to get tickets. She prints some out at a machine. There is a long, rambling passage from a badly written erotic novel written on the ticket, so instead of a regular-sized ticket ours is quite long. I don't understand, but my sister is looking at me knowingly. It is, apparently, from a piece of writing attributed to me online, which we need to present to the authorities to verify my identity. I am livid. Why would she pick this, obviously not my writing, when so much of my actual writing is on the Internet?

## ABBOTT AND HASTINGS

I visit my mother in a high-rise shelter. I am just dropping by but as it turns out she is living there because in her own place the auditory hallucinations keep her from sleeping. I try to reason with her but she doesn't believe me. I lie down with her and she curls into my empty spaces like a child. I am very tired but I can't sleep. I am worried they will tow my car. I am worried about bedbugs. I go downstairs to get us lattes from the hipster coffee shop downstairs. It is hard to find my way back, because I am in unfamiliar territory, and so tired.

## THE EXACT NATURE OF MY WRONGS

Evidential hip still won't swing  
through the full arc

of the present moment

fulcrum stuck in time  
when the locomotive urge toward the future

meets the bound and gagged girl

stop here, now  
take a photo for the archives

gather the weight of her regret  
and take her to your bed then

friend her on Facebook and leave her  
to her walk of shame

picture this: Princess Street, 4 am  
a girl limps and considers

joining a yoga class  
and then pukes again

keeps walking toward  
the future with its

endless possible outcomes they keep  
telling her will they keep telling

her will the present open as a hip  
in asana or will it seize as it did

when the dark closed around her  
that first night and every

night she woke again in the same  
sick truth of her immutable body

or will she  
stay in the sigh

sigh in here

size of her

no stay here

he's here in my sigh he's

almost here

walk the track of a sigh

and rehash your story

what it was like, what happened, and what it's like today

## FOLLOWING THE LEADER

1. A game moves forward from failure, starts the process of *we*.
2. Feel free to assume a few things about yourself based on your shadow's gait.
3. Close your eyes and try to copy me.
4. Now tell me how that felt.
5. The humiliated lead the humiliated, standards limping.
6. I move my hand *thus* and my mind moves with it, for once.
7. Without depth, I mimic dots on a page.
8. I can hear him walking, and I want to fall in step. I am mostly this moment.
9. We make brunch plans. I've always hated brunch.
10. Let's go over that one more time.
11. Am I doing this right?
12. Sure, I'll be your footnote. Where should I stand?

## TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

I loved him more than I loved poetry. I loved cocaine more than I loved poetry. When I told him I loved him, I meant *I love you more than cocaine*.

When I was with him, I forgot about cocaine: this was the crux of my love. I thought of using cocaine when he asked me to leave. I thought of leaving while I was using.

I used and lied about it. I lied about lying. All cocaine users are liars.

I threatened to use after he left. I used after he left. He found me after I had used after he had left: he was cool about it.

Cocaine is its own poetry if by poetry you mean a skilfully crafted web of lies. I transcribed my lies as poetry. Every word of this is a lie.

## CODA

what does trauma do

*it insists*

what does it insist

*a vague sentence*

*as in violent authority, as in a mission, stumbling and certainly a prison*

Relieve me of the bondage of your sentence that I may better form a will

grant me the serenity to accept  
a body that knows the difference

between *now* and *then*

then the seize of fear shuts down the machine  
of language, the hurtle towards the end of the sentence

left hanging, here in the hip

