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After many blurred weeks—was it two was it eight . . . did it matter. . . she became aware of a routine she had created, almost unconsciously. Aware and unnerved. Frightened by its regularity, by how she had accommodated the strangeness into a pattern of living. The rhythmic chant-like walking routine had given some comfort. At first a conscious decision. 'I must make myself do this' to challenge the sudden strangeness lying on top of her known life. A heavy dark blanket weighing on a weakened body and stealing the days.

To get out from under this weight she began walking the streets. As she trod, at first she noticed only the big things, the gross, the loud and unavoidable: the sudden braking of trucks at the cross walk, the jarring of road diggers blocking her path, large interventions into her walking trance.

As the days drew out to weeks, smaller details drifted into sight, the wink of the school crosswalk attendant, a sense of familiarity with the rhythm of the traders opening their shops. Who opened when, what day the watermelons were delivered, where the mail van parked on the pavement while collecting from the post box. Things not noticed at the beginning. The middle-sized particulars of lives lived coming into focus.

She was walking now with her head held up a little more, her eyes glancing and taking notice of what she was passing. She became aware that her eyes hadn't been working in that way. They had been clouded over in the same way as her heart had been occluded by the sudden change of life thrown over her. If it was the shipping forecast the announcer could have said in that authoritative voice, 'visibility (pause) poor'.

So now she had noticed a man walking ahead. The beat of the boots caught her ear, and drew her eye upwards from the pavement to the source. Slow, thoughtful, stepping out, cuban-heeled boots planting onto the pavement. His black leather coat swinging knee length marking the rhythm of his gait. She found herself falling into step behind him. He walked more slowly than her usual pace so she adapted her stretch and became self conscious—newly experiencing a conscious sense of herself. He slowed more and stopped to bend down to a young man on the pavement leaning against the crate of watermelons outside the Turkish general store. He shook

hands with him, appeared to speak, then rose up and turned on his cuban-heel in her direction. And walked past her. She saw his face, his pointed features, under a wide flat-brimmed black hat. She thought he looked like a cowboy from another place and time. Alarmed by the thought that he may have noted her she continued her routine walk that led away from him.

She was rattled. He stayed in her mind's eye. Now she saw him every day. His routine walk appeared to match hers. He was walking into her space and she imagined him as someone who trod the same path. She noticed that as he walked along the street he shook hands with different people. The young blonde girl in low slung jeans standing in the alley entranceway to the mechanics, belly button jewellery glinting as she turned to him. The elderly gentleman with neatly trimmed grey beard and half-glasses and brusque strong voice received a nod. He walked into the wine bar and she could see him hitch himself up onto the barstool. She watched him.

And then, on this day of heightened awareness, he passed her coming in the opposite direction, and nodded to her. He recognised her. He looked at her. He saw her. Frightened by the gaze she quickened and sidestepped the routine to get home. Her trance chant-walk was broken, smashed with a glance and a nod. Had she become a recognisable fixture in the outside street world? Becoming conscious of the observation made her insecure. The ability to look outwards, her change of visibility from 'poor' to 'moderate' was alarming. Being able to see another person seeing you. The strange exotic stranger acknowledging her existence. Who was she now?

It was as if her cover was broken, that blanket slightly shifted. The change sought out and repelled through the walking. The change in focus to the closer details that made up the routine walk were alarming. She was walking into a new reality, away from the old. A sense of betrayal and guilt overwhelmed her. Was she really moving into a new space, could the occlusion be fractured, did she want that? The walking and watching was slowly, irrevocably, taking her away from her closed inner space towards someone she reluctantly recognised.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Helen Idle.