

## Transcript for Descriptive Realities by Seo Hye Lee

I'm about to set off on a sound journey. No idea of my starting point nor of my destination. I'm all ears, listening.

I venture into silent darkness, uncertain. My ears, hunting for sounds I recognise. It's a regular swishing, my trousers, the cloth catching as I walk, perhaps. The tap-tap of a cane, seeking something, anything,

A latch or a bolt opening a door. Church bells, I recognise; large curved bronze objects with the green patina encrusted over centuries, chiming - swinging in some steeple at a distance. A rumble of traffic. I move on.

A train. The train slows. The swishing sound of sweeping leaves, a snap of twigs. The train recedes, a slight squeal of brakes. I'm on the edge of the platform, the wind whipping away at my face.

A click and whir. It could be some kind of polishing machine or a washing machine on its spin cycle. My environment quivers.

A clash of metal shimmers away, metal supermarket cages, the sort pushed along pavements piled high with products waiting to be stacked on shelves. But it could have been a flush of water. The sound morphs into something else.

A hum - gives me a colour but it's a dull grey undifferentiated.

My eyes focus inwards, I become immune to the world around me seeking a new world, informed by the sounds in my ears, the pictures in my head.

Running water and scrubbing my teeth. Little bristles, rapid movement, the tone changing around the contours of my mouth. Echoing as I adjust my lips to give the brush better access.

A feeling of action, certainty & control. I brush some more.

My mouth becomes cavernous. The sink is small. It's not a whole bathroom, but convenience added at the back of the storeroom, perhaps under the stairs. The sink chipped and stained. Just two white tiles propped up behind a metal splashback.

The gurgling of water as I fill up a glass. I gargle & spit it away, gargle & spit. The polisher's turned off.

I frown. I stop as I listen. I hunch forwards, chin thrust out. I switch - I'm very much alone, from filling to boiling in an instant. I watched the steam condense on a mirror, a piece of glass with no frame, glued to the wall above the splash back. Each new sound conjures more detail in the location. Or was it a flush?

Now I have this image. I slot in all the sounds to conform.

A wee or a stream of water flowing hitting a body of water as it falls but now it could be filling the kettle. The flow slows.

A clatter of metal on something I cannot place.

Slicing red tomatoes on a wooden chopping board or green cucumber or celery, which resists more strongly the sheer of the blade. Sounds continue but leave me behind. I puzzle. Chop, chop, chop. The slice is moist, staining the board, a dribble of tomato pips.

A loud noise, a coffee grinder? I'm startled. I think that piecing together previous sounds. The bells? It's Sunday morning. I'm cooking Sunday breakfast. Perhaps I've been in the kitchen all along.

The sizzle of something in a pan. I smell bacon an implement basting it flipping the rasher over. Tap on the side of the pan to flick off the fat.

Tap tap spitter spatter.

Breaking an egg on the side of the pan. A hollow clang. The pan, large and solid, its black coating coming away. How many am I cooking for? The translucent egg turns white and solid, bubbling up as a fat spits, browning on the edges, a rasping sound..more tapping.

Another switch! Perhaps it's a toaster depressing two ready sliced pieces of white bread.

Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch. It sounds like a big clock, but a clock snoring..familiar yet unfamiliar.

This journey feels like a guessing game. Is there a right answer? A little watch joins in with the large hands of big clock..methodical as the heavy hands click run by degrees. A sewing machine stitches around making the clock, the watch the sewing machine, the clock, the watch, the sewing machine, isolated images. What can tie them together?

I try, but no location reveals itself. Just the black hands on the large round white face at the station clock, but no station, just the clock in close-up. And why the sewing? It's hard to stitch this tapestry of sounds together. I stand with my back to the sink, gazing up at the clock and I puzzle. The clock, the watch, the sewing machine, the rhythms offset.

Bird song. We're outside in a forest. High-pitch fluting, trills, a distant rumble with cars, still tick-tocking, as though the wall of my kitchen or storeroom has slid back revealing a whole new world. Bird song in different pitches, suggesting different heights in the canopy. None I recognise just as the general whirr of life, spaciousness, the smell of damp earth, spongy, leaf litter underfoot.

I become a spectator in a forest teeming with life, mostly at around knee level- a tangle of the thicket with sharp brambles, light filtering in at acute angles between branches relieving the gloom. The sounds quieten but never completely hushed. Water flowing, not in a trickle like the tap, but a slow languid burbling. The drone of a plane overhead. I keep my ears pricked.

I have to stay alert. I look around I'm in a clearing on a mound. Slippery, wet bark of trees that encircle me. Nature drowned out by a loud swish - water again? I'm not sure. It ebbs & flows like the sea over shingle.

Despite the gloom, the birds keep singing.

The trees block my view, I long for the safety of the storeroom. There's a slow deforestation with increasing rumble, is it a grumble of traffic? Invading my space, menacing. Though the plane offers height and to some escape of the trees, higher than the birds, circling.

Metal wings grey against the damp grey sky with just the occasional glimpse of blue.

Find a seat, sit back and we'll take you out on a journey.

Traffic at ground level as a vertical dimension to my space and stroboscopic flicker, as the vehicles appear and disappear between the trees, perhaps this is a trunk road. There's so much movement around me. I stay still, if it weren't damp on the ground, I would lie on my back and stare up at the planes.

A big, heavy lorry drives inches from my toes, as it goes my toe flinches.

Many lanes of traffic drive by me as I tremble on the pavement. What's this pavement doing in my wood? Perhaps it's traffic that ebbs and flows. Water sprays onto the pavement, flicking up onto my clothes, white and yellow lines shimmer on the wet tarmac, glimpsed between vehicles. I want to cross, but I cannot. It's dark and the buildings shroud me. Mud splattered white vans, cars – their windscreen wipers working against a persistent drizzle. Heavy commuter traffic nose-to-tail. Colour provided by the occasional bus, the yellow lights of a taxis for hire, but nothing's stopping.

Beeps of horns, another burst of birds, maybe a dog?

A snatch of voices or a radio. I try to cross.

A bip of a horn. I jump back. Sound whooshes past me from left to right cutting across my path, not quite drowning out the birds, whose calls quieten. The dog is now the raw bark of a hammer. A few taps on reverberating metal as the skeleton of a new building emerges, scaffold poles come into place by cheery men in hi-vis jackets and the hard hats, the chins be stubbled from working through the night.

A distant announcement. I picture a tannoy high on a wall echoing around a vast building.

Bopping music at head level, perhaps a guy on a skateboard weaving between commuters.

A short rattle of something, the regular swoop of traffic now passing on my right. My chest tightens. I'm less safe. Out of doors, but who knows where? I listen around me. With neither ears nor eyes able to locate me, I'm on my own. Except for people I don't know, greeting people they do. It gets more isolating– as it gets busier.

I try to get my bearings on a pavement now or an open area in the city, the space, no longer green, but unrelenting rain.

The traffic's never-ending. I long for the bells and the birds, for the kettle and the glass, and

the trees as the exhaust fumes enter my lungs. Acceleration and deceleration, perpetual motion, petrol engines, diesel engines, oil slicks, making rainbows in puddles in the road.

I want to cough as on and on the traffic drones.

The hiss of air brakes.

Loud clanging – construction and regular banging, hammering away at something steel.

A great busyness. Nature, all but obliterated. The traffic drives on and on. A great tension.

The whirr of a pushbike free-wheeling. It's rider in protective gear, but vulnerable.

Motorbikes rev and roar. A jackhammer, an impression of early industry, steam hammers and blast furnaces flaming in some inferno. Men in greasy overalls and hard hats, their faces grimed.

The buzz of a chainsaw or a motorbike carving up the traffic. Traffic, whichever way I turn. I am dizzied by the dark satanic mills.

Toes curled up in contact danger. The hammering and the traffic goes on.

A voice, unless it's still the radio. Something accelerates away. Not me. I'm still rooted.

The rumbling chassis of a heavy lorry makes me vibrate.

A siren. Ambulance or police rushing away. A cool bell to catch the attention.

Travellers with large suitcases fighting for entry to the lift, or perhaps outside in the newly built plaza at the station's mouth, I listen to the announcement again.

A pianist plays Beethoven's Fur Elise.

I bring my world knowledge to bear. I'm anchored now or perhaps I'm setting off. The passengers are smartly dressed as they tip-tap past me.

Tip-tapping heels receded, to silence and darkness once more. Now I'm really going somewhere. Bon Voyage.