

I take off my anorak. I unbutton it slowly. Someone starts scattering crisps on the ground. The geese waddle towards them. I think about pandas, elephants and sitting in a jungle. I have a pink and blue and green and white dress on, with flowers. It has white plastic buttons up the front. I can feel the powder as it clutches the hair on my top lip. I can taste my lipstick. It tastes of Mr Kipling's icing. I undo my dress one button at a time. Now I am in my tights and pants and my cream bra and my pumps. The white ones. The man who scattered his crisps for the geese stands, crisp packet upturned in his hand, mouth open. It's cold. The autumn air rushes in between my legs and under my arms.

In cafés that smell of freesias, I think, randomly, the waiter should bring you top ups of boiling water. I think back to my milk-clouded tea, and my silver tea-strainer and how small the holes were. What would it be like to wriggle through one of those holes? The things that tea can do that I can't. I think all these things while the crisp-packet man and the geese watch and my arms get cold. I notice how flabby they are, how pink and soft, like bread dough. Then I jump into the lake.

I am glad that I know how to swim, that I'm not afraid of water. I can smell the weeds much more strongly now. I dip my head under the water: to see if I can open my eyes. Everything looks cloudy. What if the world always looked like this? When I reach the surface again a small crowd of people is watching. When I wipe my eyes I can feel the powder smearing across my cheeks. I raise my arms and swim a few strokes. It feels good. I do it again. A swam flaps its wings in alarm and gets out of my way. When I climb out again someone has found a towel for me, like we're in a film. Where do towels come from in emergencies? Or maybe it is a blanket. Maybe someone has a red checked picnic blanket and they wrap it round my shoulders. Someone else awkwardly hands me my dress and coat like they are giving me flowers. I put them on and walk back to the café, my hair dripping.

I sit at the same table as before and order more tea. When it comes I lift the lid off the teapot so I can watch the leaves growing bigger.