

# Points of Return

to L.F.

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*Translated by Jane Casey*

The two of you are taking a leisurely drive around in your lover's brand new Cabriolet. It's Saturday, a beautiful day, you are free. On your way, she stops at a grocer's to buy some cigarettes. This surprises you because she quit smoking a few months ago.

While waiting for her to return, you look around you. The street seems familiar. Ah yes. You are two steps away from the house where you left Soraya, your gentle Persian, on consignment. This moment of weakness was prompted by the intolerance of the new landlady who refuses to rent to pet lovers.

Against your better judgement, you decide to go say hello to the only cat you ever had. The young man who adopted her is in the middle of sweeping his back yard. His underclothes and his shirts float in the breeze on the clothesline. You catch sight of her, stretched out at the front of the door, her eyes half-closed. Ears perked, she seems to recognize your steps, since she come towards you. You call to her softly with quavers in your voice. She rolls over on a patch of grass, her stomach in the air. This is her way of greeting you and your cue to carress her. Your heart beats faster. Impulsively, you tell the guy that you are taking back your cat, even if you risk eviction. His sadness troubles you but Soraya's purring lifts your spirits.

You come back towards the car, your precious treasure in your arms. You imagine what Virginia will have to say and the expression on your landlady's face. Before your lover opens her mouth, you ask her to turn around. She lights a cigarette. Contrary to all expectations, she maintains a silence which exasperates you. You take the plunge: "Do you think I will be able to convince the landlady or will we have to move?"  
— I don't know.

Her terseness kills you. You take to hoping that your apartment will be consumed by flames. You're insured. So therefore, no loss. Except sentimental. Virginia, a good Anglo-Saxon who detests moving, would not be able to blame Soraya. Unless the landlady doesn't die of a heart attack. Hasn't she broken some rules herself lately?

Unfortunately, the source of your unhappiness is seated on the building's front steps and seems in excellent health, judging by her burst of laughter. Your neighbour, a jolly woman, always tells incredible spiritual tales. You are anxious to conceal the illicit ball of fur in your knap sack. Virginia forestalls you and follows you with big leisurely steps. The landlady greets you with, "hello big girls, how are things?" You respond in unison: "Couldn't be better."

Phew! Safe. For the moment. Soraya sniffs everywhere and recognizes her odours on the furniture even though the physical space leaves her perplexed. She looks at you with inquisitive eyes. "Well yes, this is your new place. Do you like it? Isn't it a nice surprise?" Virginia shrugs her shoulders and asks you point blank: — What are you going to invent when the landlady smells the roses, in other words, when the cat is out of the bag?

— I don't know. Have any ideas?

— You could perhaps get out that letter of reference from one of your former landladies. She was kindly disposed towards Soraya even if she wasn't particularly crazy about cats. You fling your arms around her neck and exclaim: What an excellent idea. Why didn't I think of it myself? You rush headlong into playing dare-dare at the landlady's place, letter crumpled in hand, and you give her your most convincing spiel in your most persuasive voice. The accents of your sincerity seem to pierce the wall of her determination. To overcome her hesitation you go so far as to suggest a trial period of 30 days. If Soraya makes a mess or too much noise, you will take it upon yourself to get rid of the animal right away. This way out breaks down her resistance.

You go back to your place with your head in the clouds. You are so full of euphoria that your joy soars through the roof. Virginia recognizes your negotiating talents and congratulates you. Soraya, more or less ignorant of the changes she has brought about, drinks her milk, licks her whiskers and sets about to wash herself conscientiously.