

## Croissant on the sidewalk

You woke up first. With the caution of an Indian spotter you dressed, wove from one room to the other. You have opened and closed the front door again with the meticulousness of a clockmaker. There. You are outside, in the pink hemmed blue of the morning- a bad colour combination if not for the cold that purified everything. You blow a little cloud of smoke with each expiration- you are alive, free, and light on the early morning pavement. The boulangerie is a bit far, good. Kerouac, hands in pockets, you are the first - each step is a celebration. You find yourself walking on the edge of the pavement like you did as a child, as if all that mattered was the rim of things. This is time in essence... when everyone else is asleep.

Almost everyone. Over there, there has to be the warm light of the boulangerie – it is neon really, but the very idea of warm comfort gives it an amber shade. You need just the right amount of condensation on the window when you arrive, and the cheerfulness of this bonjour that the boulangère gives to the very first clients only – the complicity of dawn.

-Five croissants, a baguette – not too brown!

The boulanger, wearing a vest covered in flour, appears from the rear of the shop, and greets you like you would greet the warriors before the battle.

You find yourself back in the street. You feel it – the walk back will not be the same. There is less freedom on the pavement, slightly gentrified by this baguette stuck under your elbow, by this bag of croissants held in the other hand. But you take a croissant from the bag. The dough is warm, almost doughy. This little gourmandise in the cold, while you are walking – it is like the winter morning had made itself croissant from the inside, as if you were becoming your own oven, home, shelter. You walk slower, impregnated by the golden crust to go through the blue, the grey and the pink that is fading off. The day is just starting, and you have already had the best.

Philippe Delerm, *Le croissant du trottoir*, La première gorgée de bière  
Translated by Gwendoline Perret-Holden