

I had nightmares before I came on this journey and on the boat over my anxiety started to grow It's a bright breezy day and the brilliance of the light shines back from the sea and the mountains I feel a sense of distance although the flora and topography is very familiar to me At the top of the track before the descent into the bay it feels for a moment like a perfect picture The weather was mild as the boat came ashore but when I started the walk uphill I could feel the wind grow steadily Each step I take the wind brings me back half a step And despite the power of the wind blowing me back with every step this picture will always be always bright sharp optimistic and you will always be there completely a part of that picture At the top of the hill I can hardly stand upright The bay below beautiful in Turkey's colours is the first stop Looking down on the village the sea fjord is aquamarine Everything sparkles the houses the fells After seeking shelter from the wind and eating sandwiches at the back of the Youth Hostel we start the search for the ruins only with part reluctance I step forward and down losing the little height already gained knowing that these steps at least will be re-traced We have to find the right route to cross over this terrain The paths keep on coming and going – ending suddenly A bite to eat is it breakfast or lunch at the back of the deserted hostel and the whole settlement seems deserted save for an occasional fleeting car and a dog It starts to rain and after a couple of hours my boots are soaking wet This pile of stones I look at it and to the fells and to the sea and then to the painted wooden houses scattered across this shore Some time later my goretex jacket starts leaking at the seams around the neck how heavy and big and grave and ancient and incongruous here maybe the footprint of a cathedral and there a byre I feel my thermal soaking in the water and being heated by my body I try to guess how it would all have looked at the time they were built and occupied and at the time the last one left or died Suddenly the rain stops and the wind grows again It's time to call it a day and put up the tent Back up the path out of this cul de sac and onto a couple of false starts at the top of the pass I wonder will it rain? decide not and so it rains The tent is borrowed and we've bought some spare pegs in case There's a long corridor of coast and mountain that leads to a substantial river falling from between two fells this is the way in to the centre of the peninsular and following this past two small tarns I become aware of the flies for the first time Now trying to put it up in this beautiful place overlooking the water we discover that it's broken and cannot withstand strong wind They don't want to bite but just hang around my head constantly trying to gain access by way of my ear why aren't these birds doing their job? the buntings are everywhere real live-wires with a good attitude Here we're surrounded by hills and mountains and far away from any settlement so we have to find a way to make use of this tent The weather is changeable And during a bright windy spell I take off my wet boots survey the great lake ahead heat some water sip soup What if some animals attacked the tent in the middle of the night? Once on the far side the idea is to cross over a low pass and down to another small tarn by which it is supposedly suitable to camp but it takes some time to walk this lake and the wind is blowing across it creating waves which tease the shoreline noisily In the end we select a new sheltered spot and stick the rods down deep into the ground, put pegs in every hole or hoop we see and place stones all around the tent I'm looking down at this and I begin to think how good it would be to climb not over the low pass ahead to the west not to the west at all but out of my clothes and into this blue water and swim I am exhausted when I tuck myself into the sleeping bag early in the evening I don't sleep very well keep on listening for strange and unfamiliar sounds I'm fighting on every side The wind by the tarn is blowing like a train unstoppable and this flimsy broken tent's a rag on the line The licquorice rods fold submissively in the teeth of the gale During the night I dream a strange dream where I'm living inside a zoo and before going home I have to feed a ferocious-looking animal with blond, platted hair and wade through a water corridor with tree stumps and more animals before reaching the door into my house and I'm imagining lying all night wrapped up between the fly and the ground sheet The following morning it's dry apart from my shoes, which are still soaking wet another place provides more shelter and eventually with the train still expressing through and all the way into the night I fall asleep with the light still strong in the sky Time to put clothes on have breakfast and prepare for the next part of our journey A jagged mountain skyline is the last thing I see on retiring and the first on waking powerful and keen enough to cut a lasting incision in the mind We haven't gone very far when the rain sets in and this time I'm wet through quickly Around the middle of the day the mist comes in and the landscape ahead can no longer be seen It's tempting to go towards it but it means forsaking the coast so I continue to head south and west I can feel how my energy's disappearing and every step becomes heavy and difficult One valley behind and rising up through the next at the top I'm met by low cloud and I turn and watch the lakes I've passed dissolve below a teasing gradual disappearance We're walking on a slope in bouldery terrain with low birch and heather disguising stones and holes Over a long lunch the cover completes and breaks again We have no hot water and my body is cold all over. I feel the journey was a mistake What is it all about? I'm going to die – I'm shouting

and crying at the same time Turning once more south-west there are glimpses of the land ahead but rising into cloud I become apprehensive about missing vital landmarks the paths are at best intermittent so it seems best to descend Mueslibar water and sensible words bring me back At this point I become blind even to the scant contour data on this inadequate map I have to find strength to reach the pass which will take me over to the lowland and a place to put up the tent In so doing I not only lose the elevation but the line of the route I overlook the one little linear clue that should tell me to stick out the mist and to proceed only with care My knee is aching by now but with the help of two walking sticks I pick my way through some stunning landscape as it is during the next four hours I know and even see my precise location against the map Finally a sheltered spot for the tent and once inside I pull off every single piece of wet clothing and pile it in the corner of the tent but huddling and struggling against the steep sides of the mountain strewn with boulders and shrouded with ankle-wrenching horizontal birch and shrub occasionally I imagine the visual tranquility and emotional calm of the still opaque but level landscape above I take out the sleeping bag, from a bin liner inside my totally soaked rucksack and wrap it around me It takes a while to get warmth back into my body I look at the map more carefully again and see a way out some way before the end of the range by means of a shoulder between the mountains this works out but the experience has been wearing Still a fire has to be made to get warm water and food Back on course I'm looking down far below into a river gorge multiple waterfalls fill the air up here with sound The day ahead is promising It's rained so much everything is damp or just wet through but the sense of purpose is restored and the unexpectedly long descent along first this tributary and subsequently the main river is charged with the anticipation of rest and recovery I keep on looking up into the sky to see if the sun will manage to break through and push the mist away Impossibly high above emerging through the mist is the summit of another fell the distorting effect of such truncation is familiar but in unfamiliar territory I'm left both believing and wondering at this giant and ready finally to throw away the collection of clues here in my hand I call a map The wind is coming from the sea blowing up the valley and the fog also seems to rest more thickly above the sea What does this mean I desperately want to know to be able to project Wet wet and very wet hunched over a tiny cooking flame enduring thirty minutes of discomfort for the sake of a five minute meal and a three minute hot drink Should I risk bargaining with the gods Still no time to stand and look it's looking on the move this is a transitory experience observations are wrapped up in sensory impulse and processed in a mix comprising all manner of concerns and memory including inexplicably some scraps from my childhood that I've never had before In the meantime I think it better to lay out all clothes over stones and bushes in order to get them as dry as possible before starting the hike these all collide touch and jangle and deliver me as I sleep into a great hallway thronging with the great the good and the press and in front of a microphone into which I am asked to explain just what I'm doing here and exactly what I hope to have achieved Just before the ruins we come across a tent whose residents have obviously been caught in the rain The morning despite fears of being washed out in the small hours by rain is clear benign and relatively bright They turn out to be fishermen that we'd seen on the boat coming over here high cloud broken with scattered areas of blue sky to the south the east and to the north you and I're looking to the sea to the south-west and hoping against hope I assume that from now on the walk would be relatively easy It turns out to be full of surprises – big boulders to step over which are half hidden beneath tangling vegetation I look round back at the tent and on every bush an article of clothing is draped flat and drying in the sun the weather allows this hour of leisure you write on the stony river beach I draw The cloud machine shuts down I climb higher and higher up the hill to try and avoid this terrain the beach is either too steep or too bouldery to walk on anyway. I feel the tiredness overcome me once again and my feet are rattling inside my boots There's a path it's bright and warm but the exhaustion of the previous day has left us raw equilibrium takes time to re-establish and the day ahead is intermittently punishing Finally there is a river which seems impossible to cross. It is a big river with a forceful stream. I come to it quite high up the mountain and I consider throwing the rucksack over and then making a big jump from one cliff to the other The ruins here on the shore just like the farm not far behind constitute some kind of idyll on a day like this with all the breadth and space of this setting all the pieces make sense people come and go civilisations wax and wane nature prevails I lack courage...what if the sack rolls back into the river and is caught by the stream It's too forceful for an attempt at wading it What if I hurt my knee again when landing on the rock across the river? Some travelling fishermen three brothers are there at the shoreline already and one of them comes up to talk they're hiking round the coast catching char got even more soaked than us last night he has a black and white map which I covet with so many more lines and numbers Better walk back down to the beach follow the river and try to wade it at its mouth It's just as forceful there as it has been further up but there is a series of big boulders and I manage to cross without so much as getting my feet wet How much further?

every extra bay covered shaves off one more hour or two from what is inevitably going to be a long final day Once I'm over, I'm faced with another major obstacle, a steep cliff which cuts down directly into the sea I'd seen it from far away and was hoping that there might be a path low down by the water's edge on the one hand you're thinking like this, logistically pragmatic strategic on the other you're caught up in the rhythm and the sheer wonder of this new/old land solitude and silence the dazzle of the rays on rock and Grecian waters and the sudden unexpected heat After few failed attempts to find a passage round a climb up the steep side of the rock is inevitable The fisherman has already come this way and warns of a tough time ahead A nerve-wrecking experience and once on top of the cliff the same tangling vegetation can be seen ahead there's another steep-sided vegetation-covered boulder field but before that... Somehow after the river and the cliff everything else is just a question of endurance a long graceful majestic white-water river smashing over granite for as far as we're prepared to climb and further before a concessionary descent and a crossing at the mouth It's already late in the evening and we catch a glimpse of the pass There is something bright green already there no major leaps no death-defiant boulder hops just intact bones it's not hard to outwit a river it's hard not to be impressed Can it be another tent at the same place we intend to stop It's zipped up No one seems to be around There's a rocky promontory offering no way round at the end of the killer boulder field so too there's no way back Does this mean that we have to reach the other side of the pass tonight? One way up the rock leads to an open 45 degree face that I don't want to cross with this on my back Can you possibly camp in this nomansland next to another tent? A partial rock ascent a wing a prayer and a belief that whatever lies above won't be insurmountable in the ensuing tired desperation the other identical side to the boulder field is finally achieved and punishment continues The steps up the pass are heavy and half way up we find a shallow valley, which shields us from those strangers in the green tent this has to stop the only way out is up and after a last ditch effort the level ground's beneath my feet again another crest and the deeply penetrating fjord lies across the way only one long sweeping bay say two hours walking between this plateau and a place to put down for the night Waking up the following morning is magical – everything is covered in a thick mist and only occasionally can I catch glimpses of the surrounding mountains It's dark the tent is up Sirius peeks over the shoulder of the mountain to the north there is another tent down there but out of sight the presumption unspoken is that you're here to be alone Absolute nocturnal clarity In the middle of the night I woke and went out expecting to see the northern lights – instead a white out Out somewhere in the mist instructions echo over the fjord from loudspeakers Possibly a cruiser is anchored somewhere close by In the morning early the same mist but now incandescent in the sun so everything is lit up but nothing is visible Before packing up it is too tempting not to take a bath in the nearby river...cold and refreshing I watch you bathe 100 metres away hazy insubstantial but perfect and while the waters on the clouds of mist break like white rubber stretched too tight leaving sinuous fragments clinging to the fells not long and slow but in a moment The walk up the pass is easy but slow as every start of the day has been on this hike I look back at the green tent and detect a green spiky-haired person The final day is hot and clear the sights and sounds laid out of ravens boats the little buntings and some other creature probably a bird come from the cliffs and from the sea unimpeded Once at the top of the pass I can see the most amazing view ahead A beautiful colour of blue fills the fjord with one floating glittering iceberg The sun plays magic with shape and form There is a path almost all the way The walk becomes easier as a path is found and I wonder on thoughtlessly without having to concern myself too much with direction or route Gradually clothes are removed and packed away, down to T-shirt and shorts three days rehearsal for one long day's long dream The midge spray is dragged out of the sack and applied frequently as a swarm of midges seems to follow constantly an iceberg drifts past moving north At the isthmus with the lake in the middle – a landmark on the map and a good place for lunch, the water is too tempting not to take a swim and the remainder of the food disappears quickly the sun opens a window at the shoreline in the shadow of the tall fell The rest of the road is easy walking but long much longer than I'd anticipated If it wasn't for the fresh air and the cold breeze the sandy beaches and cliffs could be mistaken for the Mediterranean There is a glittering tarn with a ring of waving leaves there's an isthmus clasping a freshwater lake in which we swim I have a halo of flies and I wish for a breeze to blow them all away the breeze blows There are people out in their yachts and boats and on land picnicking and picking berries there are picnicking family groups each packing up for boat rides home as we go by Derelict huts, can that be? There is a Danish flag raised at a verandah No-one to be seen apart from strangers looking through windows, equally as puzzled as us we walk on both tired and hot A group of people ask in Danish where we've come from Surprise in their faces when told place and distance. I wish they had been packing up to go on board their boat. Would they have given us a lift? We see the day behind us we look back still further see the last three days sketched out in hills and water The landscape is deceptive one

more bay to get around and then the climb up the mountain which will take us to our destination Finally we climb and reach a stone I turn to you and slip and fall The climb continues up to a pass and as we descend the dream is over Better take my time and go slowly I'm tired but I need energy Crowberries are a good source I look down into this familiar valley and see a pool in the pool is a ladder just lying there at the bottom of the pool reaching from the edge out into the middle