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INTO A COMA

VISÕES UTEIS/2000

THE GUIDE - Welcome.

First of all I would like to introduce myself.

I'll be your guide along a 50 minutes walk, which will take place in this interesting area of the city. During most of the walk we will experience narrow streets, absence of sidewalks and an almost non regulated traffic.

This is why I am compelled to advise you to be extremely prudent, especially when we cross a street or whenever we are forced to walk outside the sidewalks.

During our walk we will try to keep a smooth and peaceful pace, which you will easily follow through the sound of my footsteps. I must ask you to always keep up with me. You'll see it's not difficult. If you follow my indications and the pace of my footsteps we will get safely to the end, in schedule and without unnecessary efforts.

We are in the Market of Foz, beside the flowerpot at the entry.

We will leave the market and turn left.

(Walks)

We are passing the phone booth, the lamppost and the bus stop.

We will go along until the letterbox.

Beside the letterbox, on our right, there is a zebra crossing.

We are going to cross the street, paying attention to the traffic, and we will stop in the other sidewalk.

(Stops)

If you can't cross now, I'll wait for you on the other side.

(Walks, stops)

We are facing the white gate.

We can see, at our left, a lamppost with a traffic sign and a garbage can.

We are going right. We are going in the opposite direction of the lamppost.

(Walks)

We are passing the first tree at our left.
We go straight on along the sidewalk.

We go always along this sidewalk, which makes a slight turn to the left.

We are passing the newspaper shop.

Now it's easy: we go straight on.
We are in the Rua da Cerca.

On the other side, a taxi rank.

We are passing the bus stop.

Barclays Bank.

TAXI VOICE - Someone to the old square.

(...)

Old square.

(...)

THE GUIDE - Another bank on the other side.

TAXI VOICE - 59... are you near?

(...)

THE GUIDE - Be careful with the garage.

TAXI VOICE - ...it's the one that looks like an arena... with a sort of... cloisters... all around... with an almost disfigured arcade, some sort of ruins... and there is one of those clocks in the arcade... a train station clock... hanging... there's a woman with blue eyes setting the hair behind the hear... (Why does she do that?)... and she stares at me... it's hot...

THE GUIDE - We go straight on.

Another lamppost. On our left, a green fence.

Here, it seems that the street is dividing it self in two.
In the middle, the groceries store "Flor de Cadouços".
On the right, at the bottom, the see.
We take the street on the left, the narrow one.

We are passing the British School and from now on there will be no pavements.
Be careful with the cars, beyond us.

We go straight on, in the direction of the little yellow house, at the bottom of the street.

We are going down the street, going along the stonewall.

Be careful with the access to the private condominium.

We are going along the stonewall, but let me draw your attention to the corner building on our right, where we can see, beside the lamppost, a interesting decorative symbol.

SHE - Time after time I have started this letter, exactly the same way: "Here, from where I write, the sea looks like a silver pellicle from which houses and araucarias spring out. It's the lampposts that mark this undulation, the rhythm of this tide of low houses and women dressed in widow black, the colour of churches' whitewash".

THE GUIDE - We are getting to the little yellow house and we continue going on along the wall.

SHE - Here, houses cuddle up in streets of tortuous pavement. They serpent around in different colours, little doors and hanging clothes, drawing the sun to the walls. Each house with it's own little ocean and windows waiting for us to lean on them. A universe of sounds, lights and shadows, that one can guess rather than discover.

THE GUIDE - We will ignore the alley on our right. We keep on going straight ahead.

Listen carefully: We are going left on the next street.

We are turning left.

SHE - One...

THE GUIDE - We are getting in the Rua do Alto de Vila.

SHE - ...two...

THE GUIDE - I hope you are feeling comfortable with my pace.

SHE - ...three...

THE GUIDE - The traffic is now coming from ahead.

SHE - I would get emotional whenever I saw the sea. So I never looked. Why must a comeback always have a motive?

THE GUIDE - The street is enlarging.
On the left, a green fence.
We keep going on.

We are stopping for a while next to the green gate.

We are in an area of the city whose origins are lost in history and legends. About a thousand years ago all this area was donated, by the first kings, to the religious order of the Benedictines, and so becoming independent from the rest of the city. Until the nineteenth century, the administration and the courts of justice were committed to the Benedictine monks, the lords of these lands.

Witness of this long history is this green fence, which, long ago, fixed the boundaries of a large estate with a manor house.

The house, as we can see, was substituted by this private condominium, but not only the fence and the gate, but also some of the trees from the original estate, were preserved.

After this short rest, we will go on in the same direction. Always straight-ahead.

Let's go.

(Walks)

SHE - I press my ear against the walls and the doors. I hear only the sound of birds and lawnmowers. Where is everybody? How thick are these walls? What's the nature of these doors? Why do they look at me as if I were a foreigner or a shipwreck?

THE GUIDE - We keep on going.
At the bottom, in the end of the street, a house painted in a pale yellow.
Let's go in that direction.

Be careful in the crossing with the Viela do Caminho Novo.

We go on.

SHE - They gather around the shadow of tables playing domino or cards and they dress in black as if they kept secrets. Sometimes they drink too much and speak too loud and tell strangers their stories.

One of them, whom they call "The Poet", once said "The walls that surround the coast burst with silent messages, they speak of those who are lost in the centre of abandoned cities" and he left without even saying "See you tomorrow, if God's willing".

The others disguised their discomfort. When I asked them what the Poet had meant by that, they answered, "Don't mind him. He's all words!".

THE GUIDE - We are going to turn right on the next street.

It's a narrow street, just after the white house. Where the lamppost is.

(Stops)

This way. We take the tiny street before the wall.

(Walks)

We are going down. We are in the Rua do Veludo.

A MAN - We wont have any jazz here!

SHE - Whenever I walk by, the doors are all closed. It's as if they knew I was coming. As if the sea had warned them.

This is the tenth...

THE GUIDE - The second yellow house, the clearest one, with the mast, is the "Grupo Dramático Luis Marinho".

A little further and the street ends.

SHE - I follow the man who-~~tried-~~ to-~~catch-~~a-bird. I follow his footsteps. I order what he orders. I don't belong.

THE GUIDE - We are in the end of the street.

We turn left going round the Groceries shop.

Straight-ahead now.

Be careful with the traffic: it's a two ways street.

RADIO NEWS - Last Sunday morning, the city woke up to face a sad event (...) the statue that (...) was barbarously vandalised, presumably by young anarchists, possibly (...) In fact the six statues (...) came up, during the night, without noses, which were probably cut off with violent strokes of (...) No motive was found to this (...) reach the noses (...) at a

considerable height (...) The police is handling investigating and asks for (...)

THE GUIDE - Another groceries store.

We keep on going.

We go down the Rua do Padre Luís Cabral.

A MAN - Take the churches away from the city and see what's left.

THE GUIDE - We are about to find, on our right, a little square.

In the corner ahead, a butcher's shop : Talho

We cross the square in the direction of the butcher's shop.

Be careful with the cars.

On the right, in the pavement beside the butcher's shop, there is a letterbox.

Can you see it?

We are going to stop next to the letterbox.

(Stops)

SHE - We're being watched. No, the other way. They're up there... watching us...waiting...

THE GUIDE - We are in the Largo do Rio da Bica.

SHE - ...fourteen...

THE GUIDE - On the right a faded yellow house. Behind , a couple of high buildings.

SHE - ...fifteen...

THE GUIDE - On the opposite side. On our left, a house painted in green. Let's go in that direction. Let's go to the left.

(Walks)

On the right of the house painted in green there is a one-way street. We are going to take the street on the left, the one with a lamppost, beside the works.

It is the Rua das Laranjeiras.

Be careful with the cars: they are coming from behind.

THE STORYTELLER - A few centuries before Christ was born, a son of Alexander the Great left Athens with a small group of men and women in search of new lands. As soon as they had reached the Atlantic, the wind blew them out of their course and led them north, to the mouth of a river with golden reflexes. Bewildered, the emperor decided to found there a new and vast empire.

He built his palace on a hillside that faced the river and was covered with trees. It was a shiny house, surrounded by huge trees, with a small temple and a dreamlike lake in it. He built tall walls around the garden.

THE GUIDE - Another lamppost, beside the yellowish house with the round windows.

THE STORYTELLER - They say the wind whistling in the trees ended up driving him mad. He withdrew from the company of his men and started wandering around the garden, lost in his thoughts. He spent his days pacing around the lake, sleeping at night in the temple.

THE GUIDE - The street going up, on the left, is the Calçada dos Ingêses. We keep on going straight ahead.

THE STORYTELLER - His people, who had by then built small houses along the hillside, finally abandoned him. They locked the walls around the palace with heavy doors so that the madness could not get out of those gardens. They cursed those lands and turned to the river, founding a new village.

The eremite emperor was never seen or heard again. The palace was taken over by the trees and the birds.

All those who dared to invade the jungle that grew inside the walls ended their days there or came back mad.

They speak of enchantment. They say the wind whistling in the trees leads to madness.

THE GUIDE - We are turning left on the next street.

We are turning left and going up the Travessa das Laranjeiras.

At the bottom, a huge wall made of stone.

(Stops)

We turn left.

We keep on going up.

(Walks)

SHE - Strange. There's no one here. There never is.

THE GUIDE - It is the Rua de S. João da Foz. We go right.

On our left there is a fountain. It is the Fonte dos Frades. Let us stop.

(Stops)

Built in 1889, restored in 1945. Serves the neighbourhood of the church behind us. It is the Igreja de S. João Baptista, which was here to witness, centuries ago, the long quarrel between the Benedictine monks and the regular priest from the Order of Malta.

We keep going on, with the church on our right.

(Walks)

THE CARPENTER - (...) that was when I was about to sand paper the ceiling, which looks like stucco but it's actually painted wood. I was going up the step-leader and lost my balance. As I'm falling down I grab myself to the image of the Saint that was standing in a niche on the wall. I managed to hold on and when I looked at the saint, she had the head completely distorted. I thought to myself "Now you really messed up"! My first reaction was to try to fix it up, but that was when I realized it was twisted but not damaged. It was really like that. It had turned, you see, and it was then I saw the hole in the head of the dear saint. It was a hole where you could hardly fit a hand. So I put the hand like this to fit in the hole, you see, and I took out some yellowish papers. I didn't even open them so scared I was of messing things again. At the time I didn't know what to do. Meanwhile the professor came up and I gave him the stuff. And for me it was the end of it...

THE GUIDE - We are getting to the church square.

Let us go to the main entrance of the church, climbing the three stone steps.

(Stops)

Get in the church now. If there isn't a service going on sit, for a moment, in one of the backbenches.

I'll wait for you outside.

If there is a service going on our, if the church is closed, take a short rest by the steps.

SHE - Dark. Very Dark.

The eyes seeked refuge on a rectangle of floor separating the chairs.

In front, a bluish light that came in from the open rose-window seemed to freeze time.

Below there was a door, the height of a seated priest. At face's length, the door was perforated to allow the passing of confession. Outside stood the cloister of silence.

I sat every day in one of the back seats, waiting for that door to open... waiting... from the blond hair that reached the feet until the white hair that went to the grave.

In time, slowly, discomfort starts spreading through the body, like the dust has spread through the woodcarving.

It takes some time realising...

"This seat is lower than the others, it has the charity boxes on it's back..."

In time we start noticing...

"The flowers on the altars don't belong to this silence..."

The key to that door did get lost in the end.

THE GUIDE - It's time to move on.

Let us stand again outside, next to the main door.

We are facing the square.

SHE - ...twenty...

THE GUIDE - On the right, by the... belvedere, we can see a recycling centre. In the street below is the house of the deceased writer Raul Brandão.

On the left, on the other side, a recent residence, with a large wooden gate.

A little further, a steep climb: the Rua do Adro da Foz.

Let us go in that direction.

(Walks)

Be careful with the cars: they are coming from everywhere.

We are now beginning to go up the Rua do Adro da Foz.

It is the steepest part of our walk.

We can go slower now. We are in schedule.

SHE - We forgot the door open. It will be left there, all alone, slamming in the wind.

THE GUIDE - Although it may seem strange, this is a two ways street.

Be careful.

We are passing the alley on the left and we keep on climbing.

Always straight-ahead.

We are entering the Rua do Montebelo. Still going up.

Be careful with the traffic coming from the street on the left.

SHE - There was something inside the fountain. It looked like a stone. It was different from the others. It seemed brighter than white. No, it wasn't granite... Could it be? Or a piece of something that has lost its use.

THE GUIDE - We are passing the house with the black gate and railings, on the right.

The climb is almost over.

SHE - Tears...again. Up here, on the wall.

THE GUIDE - We are getting to a square.
In the centre, a drinking fountain. It's also a lamppost and a pillory.
Let's go there.
We can stop. It's the perfect spot to refresh ourselves.

(Stops)

SHE - I've been wandering around here for so long and I always end up at this place. Watching it in silence. Thinking: "There must be a reason!".

THE GUIDE - In the square we can see a groceries store and a hairdresser on the other side.
We cross the square in the direction of the hairdresser: cabeleireiro. And we keep on going, straight-ahead.

(Walks)

Straight-ahead, in the direction of the stone house in the corner, at the bottom.

SHE - The boxes of beans. The sleeves filled with dust. The smell of raw sugar. The thick pencil. The slips of brown paper. The customers' names.

THE GUIDE - We are going down.
Another lamppost.

Still going down.

Still in the Rua do Montebelo, which is now turning slightly to the left.
Be careful with the cars coming from down there.

SHE - Here, from where I write, everything changes places when we look back, and in every window there is a chat left in half, waiting to be resumed.

We end up playing along in a game of cat and mouse. Either searching for the sea between the walls, or running from the shadow of dogs.

THE GUIDE - Straight-ahead, always on the left side of the street, always along the white wall.

Always on the left, along the wall.

SHE - Always along the wall, death is certain.

THE GUIDE - We are turning left, always along the wall.

We are now entering a large pavement.

We go straight-ahead, with the white houses on our left.

On the right, the ruins of the arches.

A WOMAN - Oh my dear Saint Anne, how gloomy you look today...

DOCUMENTARY FILM VOICE - Something prevents the walls from bending more, over the secrets they enclose.

Something that lightens the whispers of the saints, whose feet the foam of the waves bathes.

When the tide comes in, the fishermen assembly the boats and the nets in the churchyard.

When there's a storm, the women keep themselves in the chapel praying for their husbands and sons.

A WOMAN - This sea is a sea of death!

THE GUIDE - We keep on going, until the end of the pavement.

SHE - There are fat men who file stories. Saying "It's in good hands." No sweat. Not a shred of wrinkle in their bald heads. They are capable of anything and when they die, they leave it all locked up. No one knows how.

THE GUIDE - We are going to stop beside the zebra crossing.

(Stops)

We are going to cross in the zebra and turn left immediately after crossing.

Let's go.

(Walks)

We are going down the street.
Here we are again in the Rua do Padre Luís Cabral.

The pavement is narrowing and we will find, on the right, five steps that lead to the chapel.

Let's climb the steps.

Straight-ahead now.

SHE - ...twenty fifth... the one with the palm trees...

THE GUIDE - We are getting to the chapel square.
The wall, on the left, has got the perfect height to sit down.
Let us seize the opportunity and rest for a while.
But be careful: there is a considerable height at our back.

(Stops)

On the right side we can see the Capela de Nossa Senhora da Conceição. The date and purpose of the construction are unknown, as the documents holding the information disappeared in strange circumstances.

At the centre of the square stands the traditional stone cross.

At the bottom, we can see the extension of the chapel square, carried out in 2001, with the support of the urban requalification programs of the European cultural capital.

Nowadays the chapel is closed, opening only once each month, on the 13th, so that the Venerable Order of Malta can perform its nocturnal ritual.

SHE - One day, all surfaces will be perfectly flatten, left with no irregularity. Only polished stones and edgefree shadows will remain. The city will remain clean and rid of all vanishing points. Rid of any pause for thought.

Then, the sea shall spread its mantle upon the huge sphere...
It's only a matter of time until...

THE GUIDE - Well, we must move on.
Let's stand up and go to the left, in the direction of the house with the brickwork chimney.
Let's go.

(Walks)

Beside the vegetation that surrounds the house we will find the stairs : steep stairs that take us back to the Rua do Padre Luís Cabral.

(Stops)

Let's go down the stairs. But be careful.

(Walks)

We are going to turn right in the end of the stairs.

We keep on going down always using the pavement on the right side. On the left we can see a high wall, which sets the boundaries of a garden, a former estate of the Benedictine monks.

There are dogs behind the walls. Don't be afraid: they can't get out.

SHE - ... Holy Land... Cyprus

THE GUIDE - Lamppost.

SHE - Greece, Malta... Foz do Douro

THE GUIDE - After the last white wall, in the corner, we cross and keep going on, always on the right pavement.

Further ahead, on the right, there is a recycling centre.

Immediately before reaching the recycling centre, we turn to the right and climb the four steps ahead.

Let's go to the centre of the square, on the left.

(Stops)

We are in the Largo da Feira.

THE PROFESSOR - And so it follows, by means of a well-known psychological process, an ontological difference, which promotes a hierarchy, more than that, a classification in a superhuman dimension. The consequence is the birth of myths meant to explain that superior status, the so-called "civilizing heroes", and their dynasties, more or less perennial, which emerge as the support of the social structure. That's what some authors refer to as "survival myths", because they have a memorial function, which enables the culture and the social organisation to reproduce themselves among the collective memory,

allowing the communities to recover from the trauma, felt every time death causes a discontinuity in their lives.

The rupture taking place in the real time is regained and sublimated, in an unchangeable mythic time, by a representation, close to those of the solar gods, to whom we could find associated, with a high probability, some cosmological ceremonies.

THE GUIDE - Let's leave the square through the opposite side of our entry, climbing the two flights of stairs.

Let's go.

(Walks)

Up there, at the bottom, the school.

At the end of the second flight we will cross in the zebra, to the left.

Be careful.

We are going up in the direction of the shop called ETC. It's the one with the yellow advertisement: fotocópias, jornais...

Let's go.

We are starting to go up.

Be careful with the garages.

We are going to pass right of the shop and we go on having the building on our left and the flowered wall on our right.

We go always along the flowered wall.

GIRL 1 - ...I even went to the little book that comes with the machine, but it was as good as doing nothing...

GIRL 2 - Yeah...

GIRL 1 - The thing is that there is always some ink that goes through... I even tried at 30 degrees... and with the... the... the thing, the lower centrifugation, right...

GIRL 2 - Yeah...

GIRL 1 - But I still didn't find the right program... I don't know... it's just that I don't have enough clothing to run two different ones, it would be a waste...

THE GUIDE - Straight-ahead, under the iron girders, along the flowered wall.

SHE - Sometimes I wake up having before me a face consumed by the earth... my dead are more and more alive.

THE GUIDE - The shopping centre ends ahead.

At the bottom, on the right, there are some stairs.
Let's go.

On the left, the health club.
Let's go down the stairs.

In the end of the stairs we turn to the right.
We go up the street. The cars are coming from behind.

Lamppost.

SHE - I press my ear against the wall's stones. I hear the passing of centuries, the essential uselessness of life.
The stones were once houses, castles, convents, cemeteries. Witnesses ripped from the earth.

THE GUIDE - Straight-ahead, through the Rua do Paraíso da Foz.

SHE - The stones want to rest, to be able to crumble at their will. They have the right to gather with other stones before they turn to dust

THE GUIDE - We have already been here.
The traffic runs both ways now.

We are going in the direction of the white gate that we can see at the bottom: it says : Universidade Católica Portuguesa.
Be careful with the cars coming from the left.

We keep on going along the street, always following the stone surface, turning first to the left and then to the right.

SHE - The clothes were still hanging there, already dry as wood. No one would pick them. Dead, perhaps?

THE GUIDE - On the left, the waste land. On the right the stonewall.
We follow the wall.

We are entering the narrow street. The walls covered with vegetation.

TV NEWS - "(...) the crime took place less than two hours ago, by which time the neighbours called the police. The causes for this murder are not yet clear. Apparently there are two or more individuals involved in this case. As far as we know, the furniture in the house has been turned upside down although the aggressors did not take any object. The victim was a well-known collector of art and ancient books; in fact he had one of the largest private collections of sea charts, unique pieces, hundreds of years old, bearing witness to the Mediterranean routes. For the

moment the police suspects that ancient documents our drawings, easily conveyable pieces, might have been the cause for this aggression (...)"

THE GUIDE - At the bottom, a white house.
We are taking a narrow alley, to the left of the house.

Yes, that one, where a car can't even fit.
But be careful with the motorcycles.

SHE - I shouldn't have come this way.
What if I never made it to the other side?
What if there was no way out?
What if I couldn't go back?
What if it hadn't been worth it?

THE GUIDE - At the bottom, on the left, a tyre cemetery.
On the right, a car park, and further ahead, a playing field.

SHE - It was easier than they thought. The land had stopped offering any resistance.

THE GUIDE - Trees on the right, now.

A MAN - They taught us to look up, to God, and down, to the floor. They did not teach us what's most important: Looking in the eyes to see each other.

THE GUIDE - More vegetation, on the left.

A row of coloured little houses.

We are reaching the end of the alley.

We keep on going and we stop at the bottom, in the pavement, by the street.

(Stops)

SHE - Here, I am a wood board upon the sea.

THE GUIDE - We have already been here.
On the left, the Mercado da foz.
We are going to the right. We are going in the direction of the roundabout.

(Walks)

We want to go to the interior of the roundabout.

There is a zebra crossing at the bottom.

We are going to cross, always using the zebras, first to the left and then to the right, heading to the interior of the roundabout.

(Stops)

The crossings are dangerous, especially the second one. Be aware. I'll wait for you in the interior of the roundabout.

(Walks, stops, walks)

We are in the Praça do Império.

Let's go to the centre, in the direction of the monument, and let's seat on the first available bench to the left.

Our walk is over. We arrived within schedule. You can rest for a while if you want. Afterwards return to the Mercado da Foz and give back the equipment.

Thank you very much.

VOICES IN THE ROUNDABOUT - A big statue. A big statue. This must be it. You're fine. It's hot. It's late now. You can leave it in the car if you want. Six hundred and seventy three minus twenty four, six hundred and sixty eight, no, sixty nine... on a thirteen per cent rate... If I go to the supermarket before going to school I can get home before... my little china girl, oh baby... The roundabout... that's where I'm fucking am! Cheese, butter, milk, yoghurts... only dairy. Nokia, Nokia, Nokia, Nokia, Nokia... Connecting people. It seems we will go with the wind, an enormous whirl, where is everybody running to? What's this sweat worth? A shower... no, got to eat first, in the café, that's it... can't stand it anymore... then a shower... just like that music from... what's his name? Damn Maria, damn They will not let me in... I can't believe it... No one lets me in... Go, go, go, go... don't stop asshole! Moby, Moby, Moby... Dick. Moby Prick! Ah! Good one, Moby Prick! What's worse than a whale...no, who invented... No, listen, listen! Listen to this one! Listen it gets even better! Listen to what the guy came up with next! What the guy says to me! Seriously! Listen to this one! Hold on! Come on listen! Are you listening? Fuck, those morons, sons of a bitch, the bloodsuckers, they don't do a thing and... Hi, mom, just calling to say I'll be home late!

SHE - Shit! ...which way is the sea?

