WRITERS MOSAIC

GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Jean Sprackland

In those days, you simply ran
your finger over the map
until you reached an obscure bit of coast,

a boarding house with nylon sheets
and a register you could sign
with a false name, no questions asked.

No one could monitor you here,
except the seagull at the window
shouting his one filthy joke.

You'd go out early to avoid the breakfast
with its whispers and repressive cutlery,
and if, as you walked the shingle,

you heard the faint tread of another,
it was only your footprints collapsing behind you

and the grit trickling in.

Each small wave wrote a line of code
which no one noticed
and the next erased it unread.

Imagine it! You could walk for hours
and there was nothing tracking you
except your own disintegrating steps.

Jean Sprackland

Jean Sprackland's latest collection *Goyle, Chert, Mire* (Cape, 2026) is a book-length sequence about place, time, illness and recovery. Her previous collections include *Tilt*, which won the Costa Poetry Award in 2008. Jean is also the author of three books of non-fiction, most recently *Night Vision: In search of the true dark*. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Manchester Met.

A recording of this piece can be found at writersmosaic.org.uk

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