



Fall 2013

# Approach

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**Abstract**

This short nonfiction piece is about my interaction with a woman on the streets of Kiev.

**Keywords**

Kiev, Ukraine, creative writing

**Disciplines**

Creative Writing | Nonfiction

# Approach

*Sharon Stephenson*

NOTICE HER HAIR. THICK, HEALTHY, straight, white gold, a shade past her shoulders. She approaches with confidence, one accomplished woman towards another. Her posture implies ballet. She cares for her skin.

Her steps are sure on the cobblestones of Mykhailivska Street in the city of Kiev. She approaches, one accomplished woman to another, and starts a conversation. Her pretty blue eyes are certain. Her stylish jacket and cropped pants signify we share tax brackets. I like her eyes and I like her clothes and I like her hair.

I do not interrupt. One accomplished woman to another, relaxed on Mykhailivska Street. Our cool, clean, bright afternoon removes the complications of this world. Our air fresh from the southwest suggests an outdoor cafe. She needs directions, probably, and I am full of regret because I cannot help. I do not know this city.

I speak my slow Russian. I ask her to speak English. I am certain she can.

She does not need directions. She needs money. I say I have no Ukrainian currency. My lie is easy, patient. Without hesitating, one accomplished woman to another, her response is also easy, patient. US dollars are acceptable.

There is a touch that women give, light and dry. We give it on the plane to show our neighbor that the bathroom is no longer occupied. We give it to request space from our fellow shopper at the artisan cheese counter. This touch of the arm, passed from one woman to another, this touch on a sunny, breezy, well-traveled sidewalk is relaxed, empathetic.

She flinches. Her right hand clasps her sleeve where I touched her, light and dry. A backward step, she pivots, makes her profile smaller. Her pretty blue eyes are not on me. Her spoken words, now Russian,

are not for me. She turns away.

Even from the back, her carriage suggests years of dance. Holding her arm, as if staving off an open wound, she walks with purpose, swiftly moving northwest on Mykhailivska Street.