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The Steps You Take

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The Steps You Take

Katie Lauck

right up over down over left.

up down over up over over down over.

over up over up over down over down.

up over over down over up over down up over over down over up over down.

These are the steps you take to avoid looking at the dead man lying in the hot Jamaican street.

These are the steps you take to keep your mind off the murder you're not quite implicated in.

These are the steps you take to solve the final layer of a Rubik's cube.

Step 1: right up over down over left

You step out of the customs room you have been standing in for hours and head *right* to the bathroom. You rummage through your backpack and pull a skirt *up* from the bottom of your things. The skirt feels much better than the long jeans you had on in the overwhelming Jamaican heat. You walk out of the restroom and look *over* at the beautiful palm trees outside. The corners of your mouth never fall *down* from their smile because this is your first time outside of the country, and you have been waiting for this vacation for months. Your mother calls you *over*, and you quickly get on the bus that will shuttle you to your resort. You're lucky - you make it just before they shut the doors to drive off. You fight your sister for the best seat, but eventually you win and settle in next to the window on the *left*.

Step 2: up over down over up over over down over

Your bus driver looks *up* from the road and *over* at the rest stop on the side of the street. He turns the wheel, and the bus heads *down* to the stop so you and your fellow passengers can get a drink. Just before the driver gets to the parking lot, however, a motorcycle comes out from his blind spot. As your bus hits the man on the motorcycle, he flies *over* his handlebars and *up* against the window next to your head. He falls *over* into the road. You hope against all odds that he will move, but he

doesn't even roll *over*. He is dead. And for some God-forsaken reason, his dark eyelids are not *down*. As you look into the eyes of a man who can no longer see you, your own eyes begin to sting, your heart speeds to an alarming rate, and your stomach turns *over*.

Step 3: over up over up over down over down

The bus finishes pulling *over*, and the driver leaps *up* out of his seat and runs *over* to the man as a crowd of onlookers gathers around the scarlet stained street. The adults on the bus stand *up* and scramble to the windows around you. You want to look *over* at what's happening, but you're too terrified after seeing the man's eyes, so you instead look *down* at the Rubik's cube in your hand. You solve it once, twice, three times. Each time you finish the final layer you start *over*, so you have a reason to keep your head *down* and your mind distracted from the whispers of a cracked head and bleeding mouth.

Step 4: up over over down over up over down up over over down over up over down

Eventually the police show *up* carrying the biggest guns you have ever seen and lay a sheet *over* the man. You solve the Rubik's cube for what must be the thirtieth, but you can't stop; you simply flip it *over* and start again. Out of nowhere the bus driver gets back on the bus and announces that he will now be taking you on to your hotel. As he sits *down*, you look *over* at your mother in confusion because you had assumed you would get more information about the man you had just killed or at least would have been moved to a bus where his blood was not smeared across your window. Your mother seems just as confused as you, but her lips turn *up* in a reassuring yet frightened smile. For the rest of the drive *over* to the hotel you keep your head *down* so nobody will see the tears that have formed in the corners of your eyes. The rest of the vacation goes well, but it's hard to ignore the dark cloud hovering *up* above it all. On the last day, your family takes a private car *over* to the airport and your hands have a slight tremble in them the whole ride there. Over the next few weeks, you can't seem to get the man and his vacant stare out of your mind. One day you get an idea, so you sit *down* at your computer and spend hours pouring *over* obituaries and death reports from Jamaica to try and figure out the name of the man you hit, but to no avail. As

time goes on, the weight of the event lifts *up* from your shoulders piece by piece, and you begin to numb yourself to the pain as best as you can. But no amount of time will ever fully numb you, and you know in your heart that you will never truly get *over* it; you may not have directly caused that man's death, but you were a part of it and for that a piece of your heart will always lie with him six feet *down*.