

Hanging somewhere

A short story or a rather long poem
by Lucie Trémolières

1.

It's a second.

The fraction of a second.

The moment I need to decide on my reaction – to decide on what you'll see of me.
What I'm like when it's not funny anymore.

You've said what you had to say and - maybe because your voice has gone down, or you've suddenly looked at me straight in the eye - I know it's my turn, and the air comes into my mouth and makes it feel cold and dry.

There are two options. I can laugh or I can cry.
I can hurt you, or acknowledge that you're already hurt.
I can pretend it's not important or I can take in how important it is.

The thought of giving you pain is easier.
If I hurt you, surely I can take the pain back? Surely it's mine, and I'm in control? Surely if I laugh at you I can then hold you in my arms and tell you it's fine and I'm sorry and I'm an idiot and then it will be about me and I'll know what to say and how to behave. It won't be the overwhelming unknown that you are to me - just my confused and controlled self.

There's a twinkle in your eye and I think it's the swelling of a tear.

If I cry – but I won't cry I don't cry – if I exhale in acknowledgement of your pain, you will know I care. It's probably why you've talked to me in the first place. You want to know I care. You want to know I'm here.
You want to know I'll hold your hand, and wipe your tears and be afraid,
but a little less afraid than you.
Be in pain,
but less in pain than you.

Wake up with the same thought in my head.

But it'll be your thought, not mine.

Every taste, every smell, every sound will be poisoned, and I want to think that it'll take the poison away from you.

The air is stuck in my throat and I wonder if it will reach my lungs.
If I suffocate myself, we'll have to call an ambulance and everything will happen so quickly, I won't have to react to what you've said, I'll have time to think about it, and you'll have time to care for me and make me feel loved and then surely that will make you feel better?

Care. Care for you. That's all I need to do.

I need to *show* that I care.
It's so much more difficult.

I cannot simultaneously let myself feel and let you see what I feel.

I want to run away and hide and decide then what it is that I feel.
With your eyes on my face my feelings are frozen and I'm too aware of everything.

- *I want to carry your pain, but I'll never understand it.* -

You're back in focus now. The swelling in your eye is rolling on your cheek and reaching your smile.

I let the air reach my lungs.

It comes out with a chuckle.

2.

Later we're both on your bed and we're tired because we've laughed so much. I wonder why you felt so safe when I so obviously reacted wrong. When I laughed at what you said. It made you happy to see I was lost like you.

Vulnerable, silly, imperfect.

I think that and then I feel – *I am not as lost, though, am I?*

The window is very slightly open and we can hear the sounds of the street below. There's a bird in a tree and people speaking a language I don't know. They're not Italian but that reminds me of Italy and suddenly I take you and me there and behind my eyelids I can see a brighter light than the light here and all the colours are more vivid and I feel the warm taste of an apricot in my mouth. I realise that until then all my senses had been muted.

I wonder how I can bear being so little alive most of the time. I don't know if that apricot is me living 100% and then I'm living 50% most of the time, or if most of the time is 100% and this apricot is more than that. More like an extra kick of life that maybe takes away some life for the future – from the finite amount of life I have.

I wonder if that's what you suffer from. If half-living gives you pain. And I'm back here on this bed and I look at your closed eyes and the idea of losing you pours a burning sea of melted metal in my lungs and the pain is so strong that I understand that no – pain makes us feel alive as much as joy and when it's there there's no choice and we can't be numb, even if we try.

You open your eyes and I hide my thought because I don't want you to see it.

I blink.

3.

You look so strong. Your eyes are still laughing under my eyelids and I feel like there's not enough air in the world to fill your lungs. You look like you've forgotten what you've told me. You've moved on.

My world is shaken and nothing will be the same but it's the same for you because – *obviously*, I catch myself thinking - you knew before you told me. Nothing's new to you. You didn't need to speak to me to know that we mattered to each other.

My stomach is pulling me towards you – I want to feel your hand there, calming and confident, and imagine your heartbeat at the tip of your finger.

But you sit up, stand and leave the bed.
Wholesome as you've always been.
Broken.
So bright and so loved.

There's a void inside you that I can only dream of, because my conscious imagination is too bound to my own reality and I'd need to be unconscious to connect with the dark depths of your soul.

Perhaps I will in my sleep, and won't remember in the morning.

But that's not what I'm here for.

I'm here to hold your hand and think of apricots.
I'm here
– vulnerable, silly, imperfect.

I'm here.

Hungry to love.