

past or future in your head, thinking your way through life, blaming various excuses for not living, and protecting yourself against life.

The only moment you live and experience is right now.

You can hold on or let go

Now tomorrow I have to do the laundry, next week I have to answer some letters, next month I have to pay the car insurance, next year I have to paint the apartment, at 65 I have to apply for Medicare.
. . . . My God, will I be able to finish my life before I die,?

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Dina Leveille

A PRIVATE TRAVAIL

The pain comes in waves. There are periods of remission. Several hours, sometimes a day - a **whole day**; and then, WHAM! It's as though there was a big hole in my body, right in the middle: from the chest down to the pelvis, a huge, gaping void. Stabs of pain radiate up and downwards, up into my breasts so that I have to rub my nipples, and my diaphragm tightens into a stone, so that I have to make a conscious effort to breathe again. Breathe in - breathe out; "keep breathing", George Kohlrieser kept saying. I keep breathing: draw air in, push it out, in-out, in-out, and the oesophagus tight like a rope. I do it faster. It's a bit like panting, during childbirth.

But this is no childbirth. There is no child at the other end of the tunnel. There's only this void, this huge amputated emptiness. Every muscle in my throat is taut like a string, my eyes tingle with unshed tears.

I get down on my knees, on a pillow in front of my couch. Pray? No, I'm not going to pray. Goddammit, I sure as hell ain't going to **pray**! I raise my arms well above my head and bring them down, hard, on the couch with a "harr", like the sound of a wild beast tearing at its catch. I do it again and again, I beat and beat on the couch like I was felling a tree, the growl comes every time, it comes from inside me, from the big hole in my insides, "harr" - arms up; I bend my back and lean forward: arms down, "harr", up-down, "harr". . . My breath comes in short gasps, I've been chopping that tree for

a long time, my shoulders ache, my arms are tired. And now tears are streaming down my face. The pain has lessened, the knot in my throat has loosened, still I go on beating on the couch and now the growl changes into words, I hate you, I hate you for not being with me, I hate you for not caring for me, for not thinking of me, I miss you, I love you, I hate you, I lovehatemiss you.

I am crying now, and I stop hitting the couch. I am crying, and the sound I make is a thin, high-pitched sound, long, wailing, plaintive, uninterrupted until my breath is gone, and when it is, I start over again. I hear that sound, it comes from very far in my past: the last time I heard it? I guess I was standing in my crib and there was no one in the house.

And then it's over. The storm is over. I can hear the thunder receding in the distance, the leaves are still dripping with glistening raindrops, but I sense peace. There may even be a rainbow somewhere, far away, in the sky.

I feel no hatred now. The pain is gone. I am breathing naturally, without effort. I can think of you now, and see you, and see your smile that I love, without rancour, without pain. I can see you as you are, a separate person, a human being with your own destiny, your own search, whose path crossed mine briefly, of which I am glad.

I raise my arms again, still kneeling; I raise my arms, elbows bent, palms facing the sky: "I let you go". I can let you go now. IT'S MY CHOICE!

Yet, mysteriously, you are deep within me now and there is no void.

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