

EASIER WAYS TO SAY I LOVE YOU

**EASIER
WAYS
TO
SAY
I LOVE
YOU**

LUCY FRY

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*For A and B,
with love and hate*

In the *Tao Te Ching* it is written:

*We join spokes together in a wheel,
but it is the centre hole
that makes the wagon move.*

*Part fiction, part fact is what life is.
The stories we tell are all cover versions.*

Jeanette Winterson, *Love*

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1

Just Sex

If I could remember many of the actual words that passed between A and me when we first met, I think they would only be interesting to us, and perhaps only interesting within a definite time frame—the time frame in which we're fucking—in which everything we say or do becomes alight

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with furious possibility, each of our words perceived latterly as meaningful even though they might only have been *yeah* or *huh* and *what?*

But visuals, movements, thoughts: these are more trustworthy reminders. Lean fibres of the muscles on A's arms sliding like ghosts upon her skin; the surprising cool of the late summer dusk and that our bare arms had goosepimples; the persistence with which A's fingers stroked the label on her bottle of non-alcoholic beer, scuffing it just enough so that she could use the other hand to pick it uncleanly off. Also my disbelief when she told me she was forty-seven years old and my unspoken reflection upon how attractive she was for someone of that age—someone twelve years my senior—and how her eyes shimmered like ice.

I wanted you from the first moment I saw you, she will tell me, months later when we're naked: sometimes it's just that simple.

...

Why don't we have a word for when the seasons switch?

We have *apricity* (the warmth of sun in winter) and *brontide* (the sound of distant rumbling thunder) but nothing for that inter-seasonal no-man's-land between summer and autumn when I next meet up with A.

I walk into the café, late, after a frantic rush to meet a deadline. Immediately I spot A, seated in the corner, staring at her screen, scrolling with her thumb.

Her shirt fits tightly round her breasts, its crisp white cotton covered in blue parrots, playful and bright. When she looks up I notice how the parrots match her eyes, both of them quite royal. But only for a moment: a few steps closer and A's eyes have altered to somewhere closer to cyan. Next look

Just Sex

they're marble, almost white, and, once we're seated, almost green.

A is mercurial like this. But I don't know this part quite yet. Still there is something here too about *glass*. Either she *is* like glass or she wishes to be like glass: seemingly transparent but also solid. And very dangerous when broken.

But I don't know this bit yet either. All I know is that A is good at chit-chatting and being charming. She asks me plenty of questions. Keeps me talking for a while. Yet, when my turn comes to ask the questions, A is light upon her feet. Deflecting penetration, she can say lots and give a little. She can seem open but stay closed, offering facts with no depth, or depth with no detail. A, it seems, is for Anonymous, though I do learn she has a young daughter (and an ex-wife), that she is currently dating *a few people* and is preposterous at sleep, staying awake often until four, and getting up at seven.

But that's OK, she says: three hours is fine for me.

She has a job that requires travel. Spends too much time on trains.

And in hotels, she adds: alone.

I don't remember what I tell A about myself. Except that B is five weeks pregnant, and that sex, for us, has not been easy; we are a bit mismatched, we've been struggling for quite a while.

That sounds... frustrating? A suggests.

Well, yes, but this isn't the time for breakthroughs, I say quickly: she's sick and lethargic. She wants to sleep from eight p.m.

I could have added that she's scared. *B thinks that sex will harm the baby*. But I don't, of course—who would?

So you need sex? says A, smiling.

Yes, please! I say.

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Although I mean it as a joke.

Don't I?

What if I'd answered *no, not really?* What might have never happened—stayed unwritten?

Then come to Leeds with me tonight, says A: I'm in a hotel. I'm alone.

I shuffle about awkwardly.

Uh. Oh, wow, A. Thanks. Very flattered but... no.

Pause.

I mean I'd like to but I can't.

Pause.

I mean I should be back for dinner, um... in London.

Pause.

Fair enough, A shrugs: your loss. She sighs, and, with a glint, she says: So now we'll always *not* have Leeds.

I laugh and turn to leave. Before I do though, I lean forward, intending to give her a hug.

As soon as our bodies touch, she flinches. She might as well have pulled away.

OK *see ya*, says A, and turns to go.

See ya, I wave: I guess we'll always not have Leeds.

...

After that:

1. Obsessively, meticulously, I delete all trace of communication between A and me.
2. I also turn off any beeps, clicks and rings that might come out of my phone or computer when she sends me a message.
3. I leave my laptop hanging around the house, open and unlocked.

Just Sex

4. I make a big show of not wanting my phone in the bedroom any more because *our time in bed is for connection*.
5. I promise B I love her—*millions*—and am excited to meet our baby.
6. I continue messaging A each day, taking two steps forward and one step back: playing, dancing, teasing because I know *this thing is on*.
7. I admit to myself that I need sex more than integrity. My reddest parts are now in charge.
8. I tell B that my new friend, A, lives by the sea and has invited me to stay. I'd like to go for a night, I say: get out of the city and do some writing.
9. I do not look B in the eye when she responds: Of course, L, you must go. I know you need to get away sometimes to write.
10. I feel unsettled by myself. By my plain-sight-hiding, brazen deception. And then, when my mother-in-law gets duped by a bogus salesperson who steals her passport and bank details, I can't help wondering if maybe I'm like that guy. *Am I so different really, now?*

...

And that is how and why, about four weeks since that first drink, I end up travelling to A's city, for a proposed night of *just sex*.

As I wander slowly from the station down to our rendezvous, a grand old pier, I try to justify to myself the action that I'm taking, the thing I'm about to do. I remind myself that I am dissatisfied with monogamy and disillusioned by the far-too-civil partnership between my wife and me. That this loving

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stalemate we've been struggling with lately has made our bed a place of greater pain than pleasure. Recently the gap has grown too vast.

I tell myself that it's irrelevant that B is seven weeks pregnant. That this is a sober choice, in keeping with my five proud years of teetotalism; that it is less about selfishness and more about *the taking of responsibility for one's needs*. Here, this night with A, is about scratching an itch, and nobody need know, nobody need ever find out at all, and life can continue tomorrow as if the whole thing never happened.

When none of this makes me feel better, I become righteous with indignation, something I'll realise later that I use mostly as a foil for lust and shame (or both) before negotiating with the dubious voices in my head by reflecting that these things are never as exciting as they promise. I reassure myself that this night with A will probably be an awkward display of unfamiliar nakedness which will almost certainly lead to some fairly mediocre sexual contact and the ensuing worry that *I should probably get myself tested* hovering around my guilty head. Yes, I'll learn (but didn't I know it all along?) that this past fortnight's intoxicating flurry of messages between A and me—the stomach-flips, sodden knickers and furtive wanks—has been the best part of it all, while the actual consummation will prove depressing, upsetting, redundant. Leaving me tomorrow to climb humbly down off my horny perch and return to B, embodied with a fresh desire to *be kinder and more patient—to stop always hankering after more*, finally seeing from the inside out how unbelievably pointless it is to take any such risk with a beautiful eight-year-long relationship just for something as superficial as feeling desired again.

...

Just Sex

This is not quite how it goes.

...

I have considered messing with the truth. Not the inevitable kind of messing—the editing out of unnecessary details that any remotely intriguing story demands—but properly tampering with it. Dressing it up as fiction. Dressing it down with a pseudonym. To make myself look better. Worse perhaps too. Or, most terrifying: to stop myself looking in these places at all.

Many will call this self-indulgent. And, in a way, they will be right. But is there no meaning in courage? In owning up to a particular story, as if it were a crime? Sabotage, perhaps, or Indecent Exposure. But certainly not Fraud. Certainly not Forgery.

Though I know, of course, that Truth doesn't exist. That there is A's story, B's story and my story; the moment any one of those leaves our heads, becoming exposed to air, an unstoppable kind of oxidisation takes place.

...

Back to that early October night: A's coastal home just one hour's train ride from my city. I am the first to arrive, so loiter by the pier, catching conversation snippets, the crude sniping noises of nearby arcade machines and, further away, the maternal shush of the waves against the shore.

It all mixes together inside my ears: a lurid panoply of sound; the sounds of life; the noise of waiting.

Fancy seeing you here, says A when she arrives.

Strange, isn't it? I smile, feeling the wooden slats beneath my feet, gaps not quite big enough to fall into.

A is dressed all in black—jeans, boots, jumper and leather jacket—save for the tartan flat cap, green and red, cocked on

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her head. She leads the way up on to the path, sticking close to the sea's edge, where we walk for around ten minutes. During this time we don't say much: just pleasantries to help us get from there to here, to the moment A steers me away from the sea and back up, across to the road, leading me through the wide revolving door of one of the city's best-known hotels.

I hang back, eyes down and collar up, while A checks in. The vast clock above reception says seven p.m., its hands continuing to tick as I pull my gaze away, following A up two flights of the imperious gold and green spiral staircase, along the corridor, into the room.

It is spacious, quiet, plush.

Nice, I mutter: nice.

Glad you like, A shrugs: I was lucky. Got a good deal.

I drop my bag and head across to the big bay window, pull back the heavy fuchsia curtains and stare out of the glass. The view is dramatic maybe, but not unique, with refracted neon lights, the promise of hedonism bouncing off waves and dazzling my eyes.

Next: the sound of bedcovers giving way, like an exhalation, as A's body lands on them.

How long have you been married? she asks, half-heartedly.

Really? I laugh. You want to talk about that *now*?

Not really, A sighs: I'm just making conversation.

I see, I say. Six years, then, that's how long.

Longer than I managed, she mutters.

The windows rattle in the wind. Beneath the gloss and glamour of this hotel are imperfections. Poorly sealed glass. Dust in the gaps. It's all just gone unnoticed.

Something must happen now, I think; I should go over there, now, and fuck. That's what we're here for, isn't it? A has

Just Sex

made it clear this is *just sex*: that it will happen once, twice perhaps. She wants no more from me than this.

Yet for all the years I have awaited this moment—longed for a chance to explore the female body without booze, drugs or *relationship*—I am now frozen to the spot. Somehow, as if wrangling with a cramp, I persuade my body into action. Pick up one foot and then the other. Walk over to the bed and sit down. Then, lean back until I'm lying there next to A.

I've never slept with anyone for the first time sober, I mumble, loudly enough.

But A is not perturbed. Don't worry, she says, her lips descending towards mine: I do a good line in confidence.

I taste her breath before I feel it: a warm yellow musk; semi-sweet particles of want that make their way into my mouth.

A is more insistent than B, I reflect. A's kisses say *I'm taking*. B's touch just says *hello*. But it's also me that says *I want*. It's also me that says *just take*. Impossible to ignore the building pressure between my legs. A's eyes bright blue with X-ray vision. Her hands now kneading at my belt.

So this is how this starts, I think; so *that's* how this begins.

Next morning I wake neither to regret nor disappointment. Rather I find myself immersed in self-deceit. Because I'm trying not to think. That's right—I'm trying not to know. I swear I didn't want to feel this. And now ... whether to laugh or cry? Or just to let it happen?

Because anatomy is a bastard. And the length of a woman's fingers.

It makes a difference, actually.

...

But I don't wish to ask why but instead where. *Where* is the point of infidelity? Is it in the intent or the act? In the impulse

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or the decision? The rendezvous or the undressing? These are the questions I will concern myself with later, much later, some months after the first digression.

Of course there is no definitive answer; there is only an opinion. My own experience is that the point of unfaithfulness can be located long before the sexual act took place. It was before I first kissed A, before we talked, before we met.

Let me be clear: I am not saying that it was fated (quite the opposite—I still consider myself wholly responsible for my own actions and believe that I absolutely could have resisted) but merely that there was a momentum here, a story already in motion long before any kind of attraction occurred.

It begins with the sense of longing.

...

I discover, quickly, that A is for Addictive. We rendezvous a week later: *just sex*, a second time.

Once we're into it, A asks:

So, L... you think you'd like to be tied up?

It is more statement than question. I feel my confidence dissolve. Might pull a pillow over my face and hide, had A not got such a tight grip on both my arms.

Do it, I think, a little more desperately than I'd like: *don't ask me first just do it*.

My skin is an organ, expanding and contracting at A's touch. She draws the back of a hand against my collarbone and down, down, on to the top of one breast. I feel my chest rise and fall as if it's being pumped from the inside.

A removes every item of clothing from the top half of her body before reaching up between her thighs and removing something else. Now dressed only in a black leather skirt, she pulls my arm off the bed and shakes it like a rope. Takes

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my left wrist roughly in one hand. It is a simple movement, both friendly and aggressive. And yet it seems to hold a clear message: *right now, L, you're mine. Today you're mine and not your wife's.*

Tell me what you want, she whispers.

I have an image but it won't speak.

A drops hold of my arms so that they flop by my side before she takes her knees off the bed, first left then right, and stands instead. Over me, watching: she is looking up and down my naked body the way a chess master stares at the board.

The Queen, I think. She is the Queen and I her Rook.

A inhales. Points behind her to a wardrobe.

Here's what's going to happen, she declares: you're going to go over there, and I'm going to tie you, naked, to those handles. Then I'm going to leave you there. I'm going to go into the bathroom and get changed and you can just sit on the floor and wait for me to come out.

What? I want to scream. Just what the actual fuck? This isn't what I meant! It's not what we agreed.

But we never did agree on anything, did we? There was only the suggestion, the kind that slips out of the corner of one's mouth, swift and unexamined: *I suppose I do kind of maybe have some sort of being-tied-up thing...* And I had thought she understood: that it was more about surrender than persecution. More about trust than humiliation.

I shake my head, and manage *no*.

Oh, yes, says A, smiling.

No, I say, louder this time: just no, absolutely and completely *no*.

We hover in silence, naked and apart.

...

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The time has come for A to go.

See ya, she says glibly, slinging her rucksack over one arm.

See ya, I say, cloaking my skin in crisp white sheets.

As soon as she's gone, I take a shower. I wash my hair and body three times over but no good, she's still on me. Inside my mind too there is a memory. Not an image memory so much as a sense, a colour, a surge—that moment in the midst of A's orgasm when it felt as though I was coming too. First time in my life that a lover's orgasm felt better—stronger and more fulfilling for me—than my own.

I'm still on the train when I get A's message:

*Just walking home from the station. Beautiful sunset.
Beautiful day spent with a beautiful woman. I love
what we create when we're together.*

I love what we create? I read it over, confused. What do we create exactly? There is more to this than sunsets. There is more to this than light. Rather I fear that something about what I love and want and need is changing so fast that it may outrun my marriage.

...

Yet when we make our fantasies real, isn't there some strange consequence?

After meeting with A the next time, in a tiny top-floor room of an empty performance venue with two chairs pushed up against the door, my personal consequence is regret. Not about what I've just done but about the realisations it has unearthed: that B is not enough for me. No matter how much understanding and support my beloved offers, how warm our home and hearth, a part of me is craving. That part requires a roving touch. It has a need for hidden fucks.

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The way A uses her hips to push against mine, moving me towards the table until my coccyx feels its edge. The way she pushes a stack of papers to the side and sets to work on my tights, pulling them down, taking them off and dropping to her knees, insurgent hands heading up my thighs.

This pin-drop quiet is frightening. A fleeting sense of hazard skims across my skin, exciting the tiny hairs that yesterday's razor didn't catch. Next, there's a tickling sensation as the warm breath from a small sigh emits itself from A's lips, lips that are parting now to make way for her tongue which, deliberate and directive like a violin's bow, makes music with my reddest parts.

...

How to write those red, red bits, when they are wordless and insistent?

I have the stage directions only:

She screams and screams and screams.

Silence.

(Lights out.)

More screaming.

...

Why and how did I think I could live without this kink? That I might somehow sneak around the sides of it, arriving at the time of my death without ever having had to face my lust for shady pleasures?

I'll admit it's been a fantasy: to be craved and objectified. To be made a figment of another's carnal trance.

But, when the figment becomes fact, is the carnality depleted? Perhaps it can be doubled. Here I am, I'm naked again with A. Hotel bedroom, dirty sheets. Just a few snatched

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daytime hours; we hold our breath and make it count.

You're in my head most of the time, A says: you're in my head when I am coming, and then you're here when I return.

That's never happened before? I ask.

No, says A: there have always been ... *others*.

I never thought it would be like this, I reveal: and I don't want it to end yet.

Me neither, she replies: and so then, what's your pleasure?

She has one hand inside her bag, fingers that search like tentacles.

I whisper something in her ear. Just near the top rim of her lobe.

Ah, OK. She nods. Well you lie *there* and I'll just ...

My jaw locks. Eyes widen. A is holding a roll of black latex tape. Using her teeth to pull off a sizeable piece, she keeps her eyes fixed on me. She leaves my arms extended above my head, wrists bound to the bed posts, as she pulls my legs apart.

I feel the tug of my skin tightening and creasing, tightening and creasing, as A binds the tape around each ankle and—is she smirking?—fixes them to the two lower bedposts.

Crucifix, I think: I make the shape of a Queer Jesus. And, if B could see me now, what might she think? Would she feel sick, revolted—horny? She's always found the piquant in the perverse. And yet she'd be upset, I think, of course. But might she get over it...and soon? Or would she let something as simple, as strangely vicious, as this sex between A and me, unravel all our years of love?

...

It is the kind of sex that makes you question all the sex you had before. That enjoys you, has you, experiences you, rather than the other way around.

Just Sex

It is the kind of sex that people write about and then wish they hadn't. It is too powerful to keep secret, too exposing to make known.

...

It is also the kind of sex that ought to come with a disclaimer: *Warning! May contain viscera.*

I have one of those wild kinds of orgasms that sends the muscles into shock and renders me voiceless for minutes after. In the oppressive moments that follow, I have a strange, wandering thought. It is a thought about my come, about how it is like a river that rushes out of the source, spreading itself out in the wide sea of these sheets. But where, exactly, is the source? Is it the head of my clitoris, or does it spring from elsewhere, deeper within? There is also another kind of liquid, lighter and clearer, now streaming from my eyes. Perhaps it started there. Perhaps there are two rivers.

A creeps up. Places her head upon my chest, her silver tufts of cropped hair tickling my belly.

She knows, of course—even though she doesn't look at me, she knows that this one is a crier. That the deep ones usually are, as if there were a button that could be pressed somewhere far inside, making sorrow automatic.

There are a few seconds after that. Ten perhaps or twenty, when. No thoughts, no words, not even images or colours. It is a glorious kind of blankness. Terrifying in its abstraction.

Is this *la petite mort*, that obscure term often used to describe a kind of post-orgasmic state of unconsciousness?

I can feel your heart, says A: it's going so fast. I think it's trying to escape?

I try to laugh, but the pain is exquisite and will not be diluted.

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Your heart, she says again: it wants to run away. Maybe?

I cannot answer that right now. There is no truer word than *silence*.

...

The French postmodernist literary critic Roland Barthes declared *la petite mort* also to be the feeling one should get when experiencing any great literature.

And—ha bloody ha—here I am attempting to write the fucking thing, organising the orgasm into words to fill the silence that comes after.

Perhaps, at its most raw and urgent, that's all that writing is? An orgasm of words. The space that follows after.

...

A is the daughter of two photographers, born with a visual inheritance.

I think it's fair to say that she's been bequeathed a sense of what it is to capture The Subject.

Of course sex is very important to both of us. But, where I take it to heart, A takes it to head.

It is a keenly felt difference. My heart: lonely. Her head: full.

...

All my life I have stared into the glass in the hope of finding answers; better questions, stronger opinions. And yet reflection only happens, truly, in the presence of another—the more intimate, the better.

Put more simply: I have learnt that sex is better than a mirror, for seeing oneself most clearly.

...

Just Sex

We meet again in London's Soho, in a dark and empty cocktail bar where we take sips of juice and water.

Imagine if we'd met when we were drinking, says A with a smile. What a fucking mess we might have made.

Teetotalism is hardly the same as temperance, however. We are both sober when A grabs me and pushes me into the edge of a sofa. When I drop ice down her top, noticing as her nipples shiver.

...

Begin to walk southwards over London's Waterloo Bridge and you'll find a small alcove on your right-hand side that leads out towards a thick white railing low enough that you might easily clamber over and throw yourself right off.

It is the perfect spot for an illicit lovers' clinch.

We hover here in the alcove, awkwardly, as I imagine layers coming off me—peeled layers of loyalty—honour, truth, fidelity, floating in the shape of smiles all the way down to the street below.

The rain is light and dispassionate and I only just recognise it for water as it lands upon my chin around the same time as A's hand. She reaches forward to kiss me. Reaching, in that forward way she has, and in so doing reaching something in me that wants and hopes and needs after all my thirty-five years of still not knowing better.

Like negative space: I know those places on me that remain untouched by A's mouth only because they are so few—frozen toes, side buttocks and little finger. It is the kind of kiss that hangs around long after lips have dried. We go from *fake* to *fantasy*, from *maybe* to *what if*, in the time it takes for a small exhalation, a hand up to the other's cheek, behind the neck, palm covering the ear.

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Thirty seconds or thirty days? Time isn't moving horizontally. Instead it plummets down, taking on a different order. This kiss takes place in a non-time; the time inside of time; in a wormhole, A's and mine.

And yet time does continue. In less than thirty minutes, A will catch a train out of London to her southern city and I will return to my local Underground station where I will wait with love and devotion for my tired, pregnant B with a head full of *why* and a cunt full of A.

It is the most visceral kind of disintegration.

...

Very soon after, there's that strange time. It's the bit I imagined I'd never write: the first time I ever entered my lover's home and what followed was unglamorous, full of strained communication and a tepid kind of sex so inconsistent with A and me that I was sure it couldn't work inside this story.

But then, I figured: what use was that? After all, there are corners of A's flat—dark, dank spaces filled up with tightly sealed boxes—that require light. If I don't show them, then who will? And so I wrote it, just like this:

It's not how I'd like to be living, says A in an apologetic tone as she is putting the key in the door.

We enter the narrow hallway in single file, coat hooks bulging on either side, a child's bicycle leant against one wall and a packed-up tent against the other.

I've never asked anyone back before, notes A.

Oh, I say: should I be flattered or terrified?

Quick as a flash, A replies: Both.

I think perhaps that she is right. I can't deny it feels like a compliment and yet I find the place abhorrent. Decrepit old building; hideous carpet in the entry hall the colour of

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spilled red wine leading to a narrow, windowless corridor and A's front door. What's more, I don't hate it with a tasteful, objective kind of dislike—critical eye cast across the mishmash of furniture and piles of junk—but more a gut-binding kind of aversion to the shape the smell the *feel*. It isn't just cramped, shaped like a Tetris tile and stuffed full of clothes, papers, CDs; it's also infused with a thick mouldy smell (damp, damp, damp) that further reduces the breathing space. The main window in the living room (also the room where A sleeps) is smothered almost completely with creepers that steal the light. Beyond the window is a garden, twice the size of the flat itself. Overgrown with weeds and wild flowers, it has a reckless kind of beauty.

Maybe I even thought it at the time: that this is the kind of place people come to cry at night. The kind of place into whose dark and fusty corners roadkill limps after being hit, in which it goes to safely collapse until it heals or dies (with fifty-fifty chance of either).

...

That A should house herself this way, in such a harsh, unhomely jungle? It is too sad to be set down. Yet when I ask her, weeks later, about her flat, curious to know whether she minds the all-pervasive smell of damp, the overgrown creepers that steal the light and the lost potential of the garden, she simply turns away and mutters:

What? I don't smell anything strange in here.

And then, she adds: I think the garden's quite exciting.

...

Problem is: A's walls are woodchip-rough and painted yellow. They scratch against my skin, nobbling my heart with their

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sharp nibs, forbidding my fingertips a trip across smooth surface, the pleasure of sustained connection.

Though my response is hardly better: I give her bruises the colour of blueberries. Find new ways and means to fuck her, feeding her pieces of myself, like cake: slowly and with sufficient pause between bites before I shove a whole chunk in and watch, anxiously, as she tries not to choke.

...

At just what point does frenzied fucking become romantic? It seems an obscene kind of conversion; the weirdest of fusion foods; unthinkable yet delicious.

The way A tears me up as though I'm a track she's racing around. The way her ice-blue eyes dissolve as I approach, becoming clear and turquoise. The way the skin sags around her stomach, craggy betrayals of her struggle with her weight and the three stone that she's lost. How she can't answer the question *is anything wrong* when it's so obvious that it is. The way she patches together some empty lie instead — *everything's fine* — as if it were possible simply to sew up one's mouth and thus conceal the truth. And yes, also, the lies. The way she lies with all her heart about her heart straight from her heart and yet against her own heart's will. How she cannot help but hurt about those things she cannot help but want. Her naked stares: how it is exactly at the point that I can't cope with it, the speechless intimacy, that she looks harder, darker, at me.

...

I tell my therapist about A.

I think I'm falling for her, I say.

Falling, she notes.

Yes, I say pointedly: *falling*.

Just Sex

What's more, I continue, it isn't making me love B less.

You sound surprised, she says.

I nod: I think it's quite surprising.

You don't think it's possible to love two people simultaneously? she asks.

Clearly it's possible, I reply: but what I'm saying is I hate it. What I'm saying is, *it's hell*.