

***Commissioned by The Real Story and performed at The Real Story: In the Half-light on 17th May 2018 at The King's Arms, Salford***

### **The Hanged Man**

*"The Hanged Man shows a man suspended, upside-down, from the living World Tree, rooted in the underworld and supporting the heavens. Given the serene expression on his face, it is believed he is hanging on the tree of his own will." [www.biddytarot.com](http://www.biddytarot.com)*

Do you know the streets I like

In Paris?

They are the streets along the top

Of the cemetery wall.

The cemetery walls are white; they don't know what to do with themselves

So all of them turn from each other.

At steep angles

Still I like them

Why?

Because they are always going away from something.

I am going away from something in order to be here. Here I do not go away from something. I am in the first place I have been in not in order to get away from something.

Does this mean I am going toward something? If so, I do not put it like that.

I have generally gone away from men. But wherever I am, I find another.

Here are some things men have said to me during sex:

[REDACTED] *body.* [REDACTED] *soles* [REDACTED] *feet.*

[REDACTED] *time.*

[REDACTED] *dirty* [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *not yet.*

[REDACTED] *it* [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *?*

*We're* [REDACTED] *out.*

*I* [REDACTED] *in your mouth.*

[REDACTED] *good,* [REDACTED] *first time.*

In each case, I have not known what to answer.

I am in this city to pay homage to

The god of skylights. There is one in my bathroom. As it faces the sky that is all I see out

of it.

The sky is white.

I am here now *pour le bon*, or so they say, unsure how to cope with such fulfilment.

I look up and see the branches over the cemetery wall: they say nothing to me. Looking takes the place of hearing.

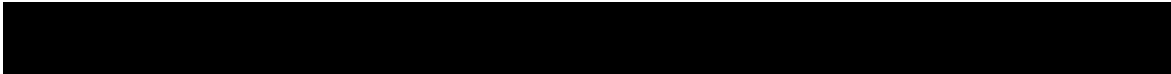
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The small woman stopped outside my door and knocked three times. I answered, wrapped in a sheet. She said, *do you have a man?* I said, *yes?* And she said, *I need him.*

It turned out she needed him to lift her father who had fallen from his bed and could not rise. She could not lift him and, watching her look at me, I knew she did not think I could, and that she did not think that we could lift him together. She did not ask me any of this, she could just tell by looking. And she could tell without having ever looked at my man that he could lift her father. I got my man and we went to her father's room and her father smelt quite clean, though he was wearing an adult nappy. He was fat from sitting and inside his thighs were two long white scars from an operation, his belly button was out and round from perished muscle, his belly also a dome and he was solid. It took us time to raise him, all three of us, two of us not even men, during all of which time he smiled, and was entirely mute. She said, thank you, she said, *I called the fire brigade, the first time they came, the second they said, don't you have a man?* She said, *thank you* again, and *I must make you a couscous, how long are you here for?* My man said, *we are going tomorrow.* We did not tell her we were coming back next week, and that her father is still lying on the other side of our wall.

He did not smell bad, her father. That's what I'd been straining for. A spicy smell: cologne, no body behind it. He could have been made of wax.

...

We went into the cemetery and the only grave we could find was Merleau-Ponty. It was white with a crack in it. 

. A few weeks later someone in the building died and we were asked for contribution. My landlord wondered if it was the wax man. My landlord said he had not been the small woman's father but her husband.

We crossed from the cemetery on the crossing with the hanged man on green, the usual light suspended upside down. I only saw it as day crossed to night. It looked like a hanged doll. This morning after you left the river was up over the quais: the lip on the edge of each quai, exposed, and I saw a man and his son (aged about 9) walk along the lip, as it seemed, between two bodies of water. And though the water on the land side couldn't have been more than a few inches deep, it kept level with the Seine on the other, which made the whole thing artificially appear an entirely terrifying enterprise. Instead of only half so.

...

I am physically distressed that .

(See how bodies displace so quickly into writing!)

Sometimes I look up [REDACTED] underneath of your upper  
teeth. White, no fillings: and don't they look lovely!

Again, [REDACTED] though repetition were addition. As perhaps it is.

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