

FOSSIL

James Newitt

5/6

(actually 5/10)

*Already ~~N~~ night night – ready for you.
You ready – for you would.*

Deleted...

Surely not!?

They literally *can't* be deleted. They were etched in there, traceable, encoded, impossible to erase.

These words were important for us. You made them with tiny, nervous, shivering letters. Your already impossibly small handwriting further abstracted into twisted shapes that bumped into each other. Interrupted by partially formed thoughts and sudden absences. Sentences without commas, or full stops
black outs, blind spots, blank ...
they were almost decorative, seismic amplifications of the tremors in your wrist.

Dated perhaps?

We have to search. Scratching at the screen, we hurriedly flick through transparent layers, timecoded and indexed, we descend – passing days, months –

When was it? The dates don't correspond. Your notes and the timecode that is – it seems you were writing months out of date.

The text we are searching for is not text as such, but images of text. Not making itself available to keywords. Barely traceable. Illogical.

You smile, aware of the irony.

(long silence)

You glance in my direction.

You don't remember do you?

[...]

Do you remember when I shoved the phone in your ear so you could mutter your last words (maybe) into the black glass? You summoned your most polite accent and said something about being busy with exhibitions (!) which was crazy because you've never had an exhibition.

Remember?

[...]

Of course you don't.

Night

Nigh

Night

It's almost black. Almost, like when digital noise attempts to interpret the greys that are too ambiguous to render properly. Until a fluorescent light flicks on, illuminating a small room full of cords, equipment, folded clothes, still-wrapped boxes of chocolate, wilted flowers and a bed – awkward in the middle of the room. The bed has wheels (we can move it later), a board with notes hanging from the foot-end. A fluoro green sticker on the board – FALLS RISK. In the bed a figure, wrapped in sheets, its head swallowed by puckered pillows.

The light goes out –

Night

The figure, its outline now visible in the dark, heaves breath into the room. It's breathing through its mouth. Sweet and wet, infused with that awful fucking food they feed it. Then a slow creak made by a conscious movement.

The sudden shock realizing that the figure is not asleep, it's lying with its eyes open. Its chin pushed down towards its chest, it releases a soft smile. Maybe its hand moves slightly, its wrist wrapped around the edge of the bedding, the hand seems upturned, not quite grasping but open.

Stay with it,

The fluorescent light flicks on and the figure is suddenly asleep. Like it was never awake, like it is perhaps dead, like the improbability of seeing the figure's eyes move in the dark suggests that the subtle gestures may have been illusions.

Light off again

– is someone doing this on purpose?

The figure is more active in the dark. Still fixed in this position it's forcing some word-shapes through its lips. Spitting the first part of a word then rounding off the rest with a smile. A hint of satisfaction in it, like blowing bubbles of spit. Repeating these movements, slowly, with infinite time.

Eventually, the room reveals itself to be not as dark as before. In fact, there is a diluted haze which illuminates more details, the source of light coming from another room, reflecting off walls through the open door. The figure – always in the same position – is wearing soft touches of blue, violet, grey-green, grey-blue, etc. Its face swollen, slightly damp, glowing it seems. A tiny crack of white between its lips gives away the smile again. The crack disappears and reappears.

The figure whispers –

good night
turn the TV off please,

(pause)

turn off

(pause ... why doesn't anyone hear me?)

Over and over

Please turn off
Off TV
Off
tv
TV days

(...?)

*If and if if be had try and have have a cover cover off TV
off T.V. of TV days*

Waking up suddenly. Gasping. Fuck ... (deep sigh).
 White noise fading as white light replaces sleep.
 Then remembering much more clearly than usual,
 a dream where you die. Well, a dream where the
 doctor calls and says you have died. The phone
 ringing (I think it was connected to the wall by the
 staircase). Already night in the dream. Standing
 next to myself while speaking solemnly into the
 handset. The voice of the doctor not coming
 through the handset but resonating directly into
 my ear, so I don't need to even listen because it's
already in there.

We're very sorry ...

The disconnection of standing next to myself,
 hearing the anguish, *so sorry*, in my voice while
 feeling a deep sense of relief bubble in my chest.
 Almost joy. Being shocked at how bad I am
 at pretending grief. Thinking about breakfast.
 Wondering if I could do eggs.

– *ready for you*

The call happened, you actually died, but not for
 long – it was a temporary death. We've never
 spoken about this, the fact that you died

[...]

or that I felt relieved of your death, as a permanent
 reality. Or that I usually don't recall dreams. But I
 remembered this one, the lightness, triggering guilt,
 that *pang*, and a resolve that I shouldn't tell anyone
 about the dream. Those long, pitiful faces would
 become suspicious. She would have *wanted* it this
 way, I would have urged, with a fragile but persistent
 tone. It wouldn't take much to convince them.

So – what do we do now?

[...]

What am I supposed to do?

I ask your advice as usual. That's not going to
 work so well any more. We look at each other,
 momentarily serious before breaking into laughter.
 We both get the joke –

you can't respond.

While we rush, satisfied with our purpose: making important phone calls, repeating the diagnosis, folding things, etc. You sleep. You make mental notes that fall to the ground. Easter eggs! You think with excitement. Eggs and chocolate will help. Chocolate that we have to search for is the best. Also: BBQs, a dog, something about an exhibition, Sydney, Frank, the words, flowers for a friend who's already gone, his moustache, my girlfriend from 5 years ago – blonde maybe, and a bottle of wine. Anything that is red and gives the pleasure of numbness. You try and collect them and bring them closer. You will offer them to us all, as soon as you're feeling better. But for now, it's egg and fried or what you think. Fried doesn't make sense because it tastes bitter with Sydney. The tube is so bitter. Pricks me. Tubes and pricks. The taste is awful. Get it out. You start to gag. You wake up, wondering why we would talk about eating Sydney. Sydney is not here and you're already back. Did I tell you?

Your curiosity is met with concern, the long faces that say there is something you're missing.

Sydney already saw saw Frank... so?

We smile softly –
you look down at your hands.

Where has my ring gone, you think? Staring at the white band of flesh that hasn't been visible for more than 31 years. I must have left it somewhere. You forget to ask us, instead you are distracted by your fingers.

They are so swollen –

what –

(...?)

*Would be go me light & delighted to go on the delighted delighted
to go just to just be testing testing to testing up no now.*