

I can't hear. There's so much noise it's impossible to hear anything. I lie for hours, every muscle tight, trembling with the strain of being still. Movement makes it worse - it's terrifying. Moving is terrifying. Scratching my nose even - I can't do that. So to move all of me. And be upright. And place one foot before the other to reach the empty fridge? No. Not today. My eyes are screwed shut - cemented closed with dried tears. Later. Tomorrow. Another day. When I feel better. (Ha!)

It's sunny. Outside the window. Beyond net curtains that soften the edges of whatever's "out there", there are happy people in shorts and t-shirts. Going on day trips. Making the most of the sunshine. I'll stay here though. If I leave they'll see me, and I'll see them. They'll wonder what's wrong and why I'm crying. Someone may come up and ask, thinking they can make it stop, and someone else will mock me, but mostly they'll stare whilst pretending not to see. And my body will be bumped along between bodies, sounds and smells. I'll be lost, and cars will screech, and we'll scare one another. Better to stay inside.

The phone rings sometimes, and I reassure people that know my name that they're doing a good job of making me feel better. They try so hard, and they call because they care. They love me, it's true, and I'm lucky, that's truer. But nothing changes it. When the call is over I sink back down, and try to be still. I breathe out all of the air inside me and try very hard not to breathe in again.

People wonder what's wrong. And I say I don't know. Or sometimes I say everything. And they'll list all of the things I should be happy about - each precious gift that I am ungrateful for, each wonderful person that I can't appreciate, and each amazing experience that leaves me hollow. And they mean nothing. Even though they should mean everything. And I'm empty and wrong - incorrect, malfunctioning, broken. I don't work like I should - I need to be repaired. So they try to - To fix me. And I watch their eyes search my face for a smile - one that isn't forced or faked, but a real one that they have put there, because they love me enough to make it better. And I love them for it. And I hate me for it. Because I'm lying all the time.

Because I know what the answer is, but it's out of reach for me. I need not apply. I don't fit the requirements. I'm in-valid, out of date, expired. Repeatedly it comes back to this - there's no space for me here - whilst I look in on the world, I see it smoothly exist without me. The reason behind it all, to scratch one's nose when it's itchy, buy milk before you run out, go outside on a sunny day, breathe - is out of my grasp... I've been teased with it so many times - once it seemed possible I'd hold it like everyone else. But this is me remember. The noise doesn't stop - it's behind every thought, inked into every dream and all of my memories.

It hurts to cry yourself raw. Tears burn and each gasp rips deeper. There has to be an end somewhere. And I realise - I do understand now. I've learned my lesson, and it finally makes sense - I can make it stop. So I think of the ways and I'm scared. I hate pain, but I hate the noise more. What's quick? What's certain? What's going to hurt the least?

So I hoist myself up. My body that works, but that I barely use. My limbs ache when I move them. I dress so I don't get cold. I slip my feet into trainers. And I begin to walk. The air outside doesn't smell of my sweat, but of petrol and old kebabs. I look

at my trainers as I walk - I've forgotten to tie the laces, but there's no time to lose. I haven't moved this quickly for a while and I'm out of breath. And I think how strange that I was so still and now I'm moving so fast. The shoes on other people's normal feet pass by next to me, and in front of me, and from behind me. Purposefully. Because they're rushing too. And for a second I think that the noise has stopped. And I feel that my forehead isn't creased, but completely flat, and my lips have turned, and I'm not looking at my shoes or anyone else's anymore. I just keep going, faster and faster. And I suppose people must think I'm going to work as well. And I'm excited, because I can see it now, and I run down the steps, and walk in between everyone and right up to the edge. I step on a girl's toe, and it feels strange underneath my heel. It's been a long time since I touched anyone. In front of me is a poster of a sunny beach that says it can make you forget all your problems. And inside I smile at the lie.

The breeze ruffles my hair like my mother used to when I was small.

I breathe in a big breath, and breathe out all the air I can. And step.

And stop.