

„You are not going to jump, are you?“ someone asked behind me. My already sweaty hands started to shake and I regretted choosing this kind of bridge. It was very popular and many cars drove by, even at night.

“Well, if I wanted to enjoy the view I could have just stayed behind the railing, couldn't I?“ I responded, not daring to look back at the person who broke my train of thought.

“You are not wrong,“ they said, and I noticed someone leaning against the railing of the bridge out of the corner of my eye.

I prepared myself for the upcoming speech, the one where they suggest seeing someone professional and talk about my problems.

The one in which they will insist that life is not that bad and that things can change.

The one which will make me want to jump even more.

“Let's make a deal, you wait until I finished my walk, and then you can jump.“

This time I stared at the stranger with big eyes, finally looking at the person who interrupted my strategic plan to prepare for my end. They turned towards me, their eyes boring into mine. The stranger raised an eyebrow.

“Why do you look so surprised? I'm not going to talk you out of it. I figure if you want to jump, you have probably thought about it enough and this is not an impulsive decision.“

I hesitated before I answered: “You're right,“ I stated. This was not something I came up with in the last minutes, this was something I planned beforehand. I even had a checklist with everything I needed to do. I was supposed to call my parents next, but knowing they wouldn't answer I planned on leaving a message on their answering machine. That was even better.

“Well, then. It's no use for me to talk you out of it. My point is that I do not have the time nor the energy to deal with the police after they see that I talked to you.“

“Oh.“ They were right, of course, they were. If my body was found, even if not, there would be questions. Questions the other person next to me was probably not ready or able to answer. They have their own life, they didn't need to focus on someone who wanted to jump off a bridge in the middle of the night.

“Can I ask you a question?” they asked. I didn’t answer, because I knew they were going to ask it anyway. And just like I thought, they didn’t hesitate to voice their question seconds after they asked for permission.

“Why this bridge? It’s in the middle of the town and everyone is going to take this bridge to get from one side to the other. It’s not even empty in the middle of the night.”

I watched as the stranger lit themselves a cigarette. The smoke quickly spread around us two.

It was a good question. I knew the answer was not going to be to their satisfaction. There was no sentimental or emotional connection to this construction. It was just there. And that’s what I told them.

“The bridge is here and it exists, so why not?” Now that I thought of it, I was disappointed in myself for choosing this as my last place on earth. I could have chosen any other bridge or building. Some of the buildings in the city even had an emotional value for me. I could have drowned in the memories of past happenings while ignoring the wind that was blowing through my hair on the very last floor. But I had chosen a very lame bridge, with so many cars in the hour, I couldn’t even count them.

“Lame,” they said and I chuckled.

“It’s still my choice, you know?” I said and looked down to the depths of the dark river.

When you close your eyes, you could almost mistake the rushing and buzzing from the cars as the breeze and sounds of the waves, lapping onto the border of the city.

“I can give constructive criticism, can’t I? And I think the reason you are doing this here is kind of lame.” They took another drag from their cigarette.

“Haven’t you been in school before? Constructive criticism comes with a reason why you find something lame. Also, “lame” is the most unconstructive word I have ever heard.”

“Now you are giving me criticism and it’s even better than mine in the first place.” They looked amused, blowing some smoke into the air of the cold night.

“And yes, I have been to school, I can articulate myself very well, but a certain suicidal someone is not the person I am going to use my brain cells for. You understand?”

Now, that was just rude. I was very much entitled to get some of their brainpower. After all, these were the last moments of my life.

“Don’t you know that’s disrespectful towards a dead person? You should show some respect for their life.”

“Why should I do that when the dead person had no respect for their life themselves?”

I shut my mouth, unable to provide a witty answer to that. They were very pleased judging by their facial expression.

The silence around us was comfortable, almost like the presence of the person next to me said enough without them having to utter anything.

Minutes went by and the night continued normally. From time to time there were sirens heard in the background. Those sounds scared me at first, thinking that the police or the firefighters planned on getting me off the bridge and probably into a mental hospital. But now, I knew this was just the sound of an always awake city with emergencies in the middle of the night.

“How can you be so calm?” I asked the stranger next to me. I had always imagined that the people finding others trying to jump would freak out, maybe cry, and drag them back to safety behind the railing.

They shrugged their shoulders.

“I’m not sure,” they said, “I think that you won’t change your mind and I cannot do anything to stop you from jumping. And maybe, maybe I can benefit from this situation.”

I already figured they would be a weirdo since they talked this openly to someone who was going to jump off the bridge in a few minutes. Now I figured they were a psychopath who would probably get sparks of joy when they see me flying to my end.

They probably noticed how my expression changed when they said it and laughed a little.

“Do you think I’m a psychopath now?”

“Yes, absolutely. Maybe I’ll drag you with me when I jump.” The last part was a bit quieter, muttered under my breath.

“As a psychopath, I will probably enjoy you dragging me with you too, you know?” they answered and I rolled my eyes. Why couldn’t I prepare for my death alone?

“But I’m not. A psychopath, that is. I am a writer,” He said with a wide grin which made the whole situation even more suspicious.

“As a psychopath, I would say the same now, to be honest,” I mentioned, raising an eyebrow. The railing I clung desperately to started to freeze my hands. There was no sunlight to warm it up and the temperature was still falling under 10 at night.

“Also, you can be a psychopath and a writer,” I added, and the person next to me sighed in defeat.

“Think of me whatever you want to think, I guess. But I am a writer and I don’t think it would profit me to lie to someone who is a dead person talking.” Suddenly they grabbed my hand, scaring me half to death already and making me slightly slip from the railing.

“You are not jumping before you tell me why you are here,”

“Excuse me?” I exclaimed, totally baffled by their bold way of grabbing me.

The grip on my wrist was very strong, almost concerningly strong for someone their size. Their hand was warm, which created a welcome contrast to my freezing hand. I wasn’t quite sure if they were serious or if this was just a joke.

“You have no right to ask this from me.” I stated, almost a little scared.

“But what would be the reason for you to not tell me? Don’t you want to be remembered? Imagine me writing a bestseller that will be read by thousands of people and you will be part of it. Now, doesn’t that sound cool?”

“You sound like a salesman on my doorstep, begging to be let in,” I mentioned and shook my head “And no, I do not want to be in your bestseller. The reason I am here is not novel friendly nor do I want to be remembered as the person who yeeted themselves of the bridge.”

The stranger huffed annoyed. “You are weird. Anyone would jump for this opportunity.”

I smiled triumphantly “Yep, I’m not jumping now but I will eventually!” The stranger looked at me with a mixture of disgust and disbelief. I got serious again, my smile fading. A couple of months ago, I really would have liked that idea of being remembered. I was still unsure how everything was able to go downhill so quickly.

“Maybe this was also a plan to get you to open up and maybe realize that it is not worth jumping.” the stranger admitted. Their cigarette was slowly going out so they threw it onto the ground to stomp on it.

“So, you do want to keep me from ending my life. What has become of your comment before, that this was probably a well thought about decision?” I asked.

The person next to me just stayed silent. Eyes mustering me and then looking down the bridge where the river was silently flowing through the night, its black mass barely recognizable as water.

“Hope, I think. Hope that you might decide to climb behind the railing again and walk home to restart your life. You are so young; wouldn’t it be nice to see the world and maybe find someone with whom you will spend the rest of your lives together?”

They let go of my hand, making it instantly colder, and leaned against the metal I was holding on to. I watched them with a weird feeling in my stomach.

“Technically, I have found someone who will spend the rest of my life with me, haven’t I?”

They chuckled and turned to me. “But what about me? My life isn’t complete. You owe me my life when I spend the rest of yours with you. Only fair.”

“Now we’re back at statements that make no sense, I don’t even know you!” I tried to speak in a humorous tone, but my voice wavered and it sounded more desperate than I wanted it to come out. It felt like I was lying, like I knew this person for a lifetime but I couldn’t quite reach the information about them in my brain, as if it was at the tip of my tongue.

I knew this was leading to the end of our conversation, this was the final words I would speak to them. Maybe even the final words I would speak in general, if it wasn’t for the phone call I still wanted to do.

“We could change that,” they raised their eyebrow, reaching into their pocket. With a pen, they wrote something on a white card. Their handwriting was scribbly and uneven due to the lack of a flat surface. I could only take a quick glance at the paper, seeing “hoping psychopath” written with a blue marker on it. They wanted to hand it to me but noticing that I couldn’t reach for it, they stuffed it into the back pocket of my jeans.

I wanted to make a comment about the fact that those touches aren’t appropriate, not before a date or two, but I held back, words stuck in my throat.

“I don’t even know if you want to contact me after this, but just give me a head’s up when you are still alive tomorrow, okay?” One last time they smiled at me before turning and walking away. I was left, staring at their back and into the night. I wasn’t sure before, but now I knew exactly what I was going to do.