

Present Moment

A play by Limor Naya ziv (Ginzburg)

A small room with a bed, mosquito net, tea kettle, cups and saucers, tea, rucksack.

Loli (aged 28):

Rising falling rising falling. It's a simple exercise. Observe the rise and fall of the stomach while you breathe. Rising falling rising falling. I just can't do it. risingRising falling rising falling. If a thought passes,

acknowledge that a thought is passing. If I suddenly feel something, hear a sound, sense a smell, acknowledge, acknowledge it and return to breathing. Very simple. concentration plus awareness. What the hell am I talking about? Rise, fall ... fascinating!

(Hears the sound of a toilet flushing from right stage). My neighbor. Doesn't do much meditation, but she's very good at doing her laundry at eleven p.m. night

In. Out. In. Out. Interesting connotation, isn't it?

Wonder what he's doing right now with his new girlfriend.

Really, what could they possibly be doing? He can't hold a

, Conversation, doesn't cook doesn't cook, hates to work, so what's really left

For them to do? In out. In out.

How long will they last anyway? Maybe she doesn't need much. Doesn't worry herself wondering whether he loves her, or

He's just got nothing better to do. That's the way it should be. Simplicity. I'm not capable of being simple. That's my problem. Out. In. Out.

My heart is aching aching aching aching. Rising. And there's no way in the

World that it will ever stop aching. Falling. Hey! That was a thought! It actually was a whole series of thoughts, but I can't remember how it began. Start again. Rising falling

rising falling. What the hell am I going to do with my life? Rising and falling and falling? That's what I'll do? The monk said that all problems could be solved by doing that.

Monk problems Maybe. At the age of twenty-nine, Gautama the Buddha discovered that there' suffering in the world.

Wow. Not bad, ah? I realized it when I was eight. But he claimed that he managed to overcome it, and, supposing he's right, and there's even the slightest chance that he is , I've got nothing to lose.

Why am I so tense? What's wrong with me? What sin have I committed?

Rising, falling. Now my feet are going numb. Who cares about the breathing? Rising, falling. Maybe it's totally unhealthy to sit like this for so long? Oh, a thought! For the Asians it may come naturally.

Another thought. My feet are getting numb and I'm ruining my knees. Rising, falling, rising, falling.

And it doesn't help that it's rising and falling.

I bet she's not driving him nuts, that's what hurts. Pain pain pain.

Must look at the pain from the outside. Without identifying with it. I look at the pain.

The pain looks at me. Pain is your best teacher." I'm watching it. It doesn't help

Nothing helps. Nothing ever has Neither God, nor Buddha. I have this pain, and there's nothing more to it. Everything is impermanent, he said. Everything!!! Except for my pain. I'm losing my feet. That's a change at least.

Rising, falling. Why won't that clock ring??? Rising, falling. Maybe it's stopped, and I've been sitting (for an extra hour)? Worry ... peep at the clock? No, the monk said not to. And what if the hour's up and I'm causing irreversible damage to my knees? Anxiety! But the pain is ruining my concentration and the anxiety's spoiling my awareness

Anyhow! Rising, falling! Rising falling

OK then – let's try to observe the pain objectively. as if it possible.

A sharp pain from my knee threw the thigh up to the right buttock. This is the area of Agony. End of analysis. Conclusions?

Pain pain pain. Don't give up. Rising, falling. Don't give in. just rising and falling rising falling - Come on, ring! Ring! Ring, already! Only just and,

I don't care anymore! He can love her, marry her, get bored with her, build a simple healthy relationship with her and get the hell out of my head! Just save my knee!
 Hold on, what keeps me from stretching my legs? Will someone punish me? I must be the best meditator in Thailand. Am I a candidate for (first prize in) the Meditators' Handicapped Olympic Games? Is it doing me any good at all? Will I suffer less if I suffer more? Yes, thoughts, wonderful thoughts –always had them always will. Yes. Rising. Yes. Falling. Hurray rising. Hurray falling come along!

I'm simply lousy at this too. All the others are sitting sit there motionless like a little statue of Buddhas, smiling as if they'd discovered America. Clearly, they're not suffering like me. (That's all there is to it). Let's see them deal with my issues. He doesn't love me. Doesn't love. Doesn't love. Rising. Rising

My breath is getting slower. Rising. Falling. Fresh air. A Pleasant feeling.

It hurts less. A Thought. A strange jungle sounds. Crickets. Hearing?

I can feel the air filling up my belly stomach, and then slowly flowing out. It's relaxing. (rising and falling)

What's that noise? She's doing her laundry again. Anger. Anger. Anger.

I won't let the anger stop me. I won't let it come between me and my happiness.

But why must you test me?

Go to the river and do your laundry there. This is a place for meditation! How can one look at one's own anger objectively?

Interrogation: throat closed, and tenses neck all stiff, shoulders ... She's not quite normal after all. Objectively She's irritating...

Why do you have to interfere with my spiritual progress? Pain pain pain.

Thinking. Thinking Thinking. Anger. Anger. Anger? Ah!? I think I've got it.

Falling. Rising, falling. Rising, falling. You are ok, Buddha. Anger is impermanent.

Rising.

My throat's relaxed. My breathing has slowed down. A thought! It's easier now. It's OK.

Rising falling. rising falling

I'm hungry – sensation. Why didn't I staff myself at lunch? –A thought. Rising, falling.

Rising, falling. Ay ... tuna and mayonnaise – craving ... I'm hungry. Very very hungry – desire...

There's a little restaurant at the monastery gate ...mm. Thai noodles ... no, don't move.
Don't react!

My last meal was at ten thirty this morning! Yearning yearning yearning. Lust!

I'm not allowed any solid food until six thirty tomorrow morning.

How will I survive?

At four o'clock in the morning the bell will ring for us to get up,

While all the menage dogs bark hysterically. At four thirty the monks gather to pray and chant and I'll meditate till six thirty.

At six thirty they'll serve breakfast. Rice porridge and dried fish. Thinking. . Thinking.

But I'll eat anything at this stage,

I've got a whole night till my next meal. Despair. Sleep is the only pleasure left.

Rising, falling. Hmmm. What A pleasant sensation. Rising, falling... ...

Feels good. The hunger has gone. What a meditator! (I am). Rising falling

A thought. Pleasant thought. It feels good. Is feeling good, a better meditation?

I'm giving myself grades. Judgment. But it's really pleasant ... for God sake – what's wrong with things being pleasant? Guilt. Guilt of feeling pleasant. All right, I've got it.

Back to breathing. Rising, falling. rising, falling. rising, falling.

It all comes and goes. An unending stream of changes. How am I? I'm fine. Thank you.

I'm at ease... It's flowing... it works.

(She is cut short by the ringing of an alarm clock. She turns it off.)

So hot suddenly! (Starts making some tea and a clock ring from stage right) Aha ... So she's meditating, after all. Mazl tov. It's about time.

How wonderful it is to be in the present. Nothing's to bother about. I won't think about the past. In order to be completely (fully) present, I must watch (guard) my awareness, second by second, like a secret agent.

(Starts spooning up some sugar – pours it in) So where am I? In the present, or in thoughts of the present? Ok – cleaning cleaning. Putting sugar. Pouring. It's hot. Got to wait. No patience.

I won't think about him won't think about him. I'll get him out of my system.

(Takes a sip. change of lighting). Twenty-three days of twelve hours meditation a day Have passed, and That's it, I'm entering the determination phase. Twenty-four hours of

Constant meditation, without leaving the room or going to sleep!

(Organizes her things. Inadvertently tears a page quickly:)

I ask for forgiveness, forgiveness from all those I ever harmed,

Intentionally, or unintentionally, knowingly or unknowingly, by thought, speech or deed.

I forgive all those who ever hurt me, intentionally, or unintentionally, knowingly or unknowingly, by thought, speech or action. How lovely. Very moving.

May I be happy? May I be free of suffering, animosity, and ill will, sickness and sorrow.

May I be protected from any danger or misfortune. May I be calm, joyful and happy.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be free of suffering, animosity, and ill will, free of sickness and sorrow.,

May all beings and let them be protected from any danger or misfortune. May all beings live in peace and harmony, joy and happiness.

(Performs a mindful prostration).

Heel up, lifting, forwarding, lowering, touching, putting. It feels like my foot is cutting through the air dense as water. I can feel every little movement

All my attention is on my foot. (Laundry noise)

There she goes again; how dirty can it get?

That my girl. Go for it. Good for you.

Nothing can bother me anymore. A spark of anger arises, I am aware. That's it.

How am I going to hang on without any sleep? I am eight hours a night person!

O.K worry. 80% of me is pure worry. It's over. Fading out. Heel, up, lifting, moving,

lowering, putting ... Ah? What was that? Unbelievable. I've killed an ant. An ant! I didn't notice. The moment I saw it was the moment I squashed it. What business does it

have wandering here under my feet? Is it dead? Maybe it can still be saved? It could

have just fainted. Wake up! Please don't die on me! Don't die on me Hey! It's lost a leg.

It's not breathing. Murder. I've murdered an ant. I took five precepts. I pledged myself to avoid killing, stealing, lying, and drugs. You can't purify your mind without moral purity.

I've so much to purify! Can't you see? I can't afford committing a murder during

determination! Isn't it enough being a murderer in a previous life? Of course, why do you think everyone ends up leaving me?

(It all comes back to me). I've got enough things to account for. I don't need you, too.

on the top of the rest!

Come on, please come back to life! How much can I weigh, anyway? Don't do this to me! It's crucial! Worry worries worry.

– O.K. enough. That your karma. Forgive me ant. (Sits down).

I ask forgiveness, forgiveness from all those I ever harmed.

Intentionally, or unintentionally, knowingly or unknowingly, by thought, speech or act. I forgive all those who ever hurt me. Intentionally, or unintentionally, knowingly or unknowingly, by thought, speech or act.

Do I forgive you, my love? You and your stupid bitch? In your dreams! But I am really trying, aren't I?

May I be happy. Free of suffering, free of animosity and ill will, sickness and sorrow, let me be protected from any danger or misfortune. May I be calm, joyful and happy. May all beings be happy. Free of suffering, animosity and ill will, free of sickness and sorrow, and let them be protected from any danger or misfortune. May all beings live in peace and harmony, joy and happiness.

That is? Nothing more? What about some excitement, passion, something!

Starts a walking meditation) heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, touching, potting.

What a night. From Moment to moment Everything's changes. Heel up, lifting

Forwarding. Lowering. Touching. Heel up.

My language teacher once told me that in Hebrew there's no such thing as present tense. The present moment simply doesn't exist, he had said. It's the inconceivable split-second, between past and future, and this inconceivable second, inconceivable, he said, is called intermediate time.

Well, that explains something about the Jewish karma, doesn't it?

On the one hand we spend all this time celebrating 2000 years' worth of suffering, on the other hand we are all longing for the coming messiah, and what left in the middle? Our present moment,

Chaos, war, confusion. Nothing to write home about. – a black hole of inconceivable time that we need to sort out.

It's rather intermediate, transitional, middle time - the present –

And here I am doing everything I can to be in the moment.

It's not easy, especially not with my heritage, but it's the only time I've got.

– past is gone- No matter how much I fantasize about it.

Even this moment- gone, the future – isn't here yet. Excuse me mister teacher, They are the ones that do not exist. Present moment is the only time to live. Yes, thoughts, if you are mindful enough, and don't get lost in your thoughts. Amazing Buddha! How did you do it? How did you manage to find the way all by yourself? How did you succeed in overcoming all the thoughts, illusions and dreams? How did you come to understand that thoughts are just thoughts? A worry is just worry, not some FINAL VERDICT. You gave up a palace, a crown, a wife and child, to discover the present. I CAN'T EVEN LET GO OF My OLD Brows. You taught a chain of teachers, who passed your teachings on to one another for 2,500 years and even managed to reach me. I, who think now, instead of being in the present. I have ONE night left, and THIS IS the most important thing I've ever done. So come on, let's do it. Heel up, lifting, forwarding, lowering, touching, potting. I am going to discover something important tonight ... crickets. Hearing. Dark outside ...a feeling. I am all-alone till morning. Heel up, (shivering.) A feeling. Forwarding, lowering, touching, putting.

I am so close, really close to something, don't miss it. Just don't screw up!

...that's what you're here for. Heel up lifting, forwarding... what's that? I know this feeling...Go on. Heel up, lifting, forward, lowering, touching. Danger.

Feeling, feeling, feeling. That's all. A Feeling! remember it comes and goes. It's impermanent. (Exerted breathing) yes, but what is it? Fear. Why won't it go away? Fear fear. Something isn't right. The monks. They must have missed something, they didn't realize I'm different, they can't understand a case like mine. I shouldn't have trusted them. Wait, what's going on? Thoughts. I don't have to believe all this non-sense; it's all thoughts. Doubts. Anxiety. Nothing happened. I am walking across the room, In control of the situation. Anxiety anxiety anxiety.

What have you done? No, think about it, what did you do? Can't you just once do things, right?

But I'm not supposed to feel like this, not now.

Now I should be at the top . Peaceful, full of insight, Concentration, a total understanding of life, not having these lousy feelings! Heel up. Lifting, moving, lowering. Touching, putting.

I can't breathe. Stop whining! I'm going to the teacher. What does he know any way?

How can he possibly understand? I have to get out of here, to the stupa outside. They say that the temple calms nervous meditators because a Buddha wisdom tooth is buried somewhere there. ...Or something ... (exits)

Fear fear fear. Heel up. Lifting, Forwarding, lowering. Touching. Putting. Heel up.

Lifting. What? No.

Concentrate. Standing standing standing. Fear. Dark.. I hate it. What am I doing here?

(Steps) it's dangerous. I'm losing it. It's genetic. It runs in the family. Concentrate.

Why aren't you saying thought thoughts thoughts. What about all that stuff they've been teaching you. Standing standing standing. (Fails to take in air) standing standing standing. Heel up. Don't want to. Raise a heel.

I'll never make it. I know. Thoughts. Standing. Thoughts. Heel Up. Lifting. Forwarding.

Lowering. Touching. Putting. Come on. Heel Up. Lifting. Forwarding. What.

Don't stop. Lowering. Touching. Putting. Keep going, keep going. Heel up. There's, not, enough, air, go on, Heel Up. Lifting. Forwarding. Enough!! Come on. Enough!! I don't want to meditate!

(Runs in from "outside" into the "room," and drops down to a kneeling position)

Listen Buddha! It's too much for me! Are you listening? I'm really scared.

Have I just stopped the retreat? No, no way, I never stop things in the middle. That's all I need. For the rest of my life, I'll be torture myself for not following something through to the end. And here, of all places, where the end is supposed to be the end of all my suffering and there's only one night left! How am I going to survive one more moment of this night? Always, but always, something has to go wrong at the last minute! What, Do I always have to lose everything I've earned through blood sweat and tears?

Do I always have to lose? Can't I ever win?

If I ever succeed, is it only to lose it and start all over again? What's it all for?

What have I done wrong? What I'm asking for any way? (Did I ask for too much?) I ask to suffer less that's all!

Not to be loved by someone, not to fulfill my dreams.

Ho me??? How can it be me??? Why should I be happy!?

And nothing good is ever going to happen to me. No love will survive. I can't see how meditation can change any of that. I'm watching my breathing, and there's no breathing to watch. How am I supposed to meditate without breath? (Cries) what a lousy karma!

What are you punishing me for? Again? And again. And again.

...Where are you? Here?! I always knew you were with me. Are you with me, daddy? I can feel it. Are you here? I want to see you! Stop it. I am imagining things. He's here.

How can he be here? I can't see him; I can't hear him. I am making it up.

He's suffering. I know it. You don't know anything! This is just rationalization, because you know what the Buddhists say about karma, which depends on how you live and how you die. He's calling me... Daddy, tell me where you are and what you need. I'll help you. Just say the word, but I don't know anything. I'm all alone here. Alone, alone. And no one loves me daddy. It's too hard to love me. I'm terrible. I'm just like mom, I don't give any space...

Who am I talking to, anyway? Thoughts, yeah, how did it go? Heel up, lifting... my head.... It worked before, now I can't concentrate. Can't separate thoughts, from breathing, from standing. It's all mixed up. I'm stuck! Who's to blame? Me? You? Or him, up there, who fell asleep on the watch again.

I couldn't save him. Children aren't supposed to save their parents. That's your job!

Do you hear me? God! Buddha! Mohammed! And now you've screwed it up again! I tried, and the karma was waiting around the corner. Why did I bother trying? For fun?

What am I, Sisyphus?

nu Buddha, don't you get it? This is a case of a beginner who needs a little push from outside! Don't you see I don't have so much inside? It's much more complicated than you think! Believe me.

Oh, so now is this my lesson, to suffer??! Then why here? I rather be suffering under a coconut tree, getting stoned.

I'm glad it amuses you! At least in the real world no one promises you liberation from suffering. At least they're honest. But here – it's a scam. Frauds. Charlatans! What, is this about my low-cut tops? The ant?

Are you that petty? You know what? That's it. I give up. We're through.

I'm laying out my bed; I'm stopping to fight and going to sleep. With full observation and mindfulness. I'm tired. Are you happy now?

And you can get lost!

(Goes to sleep)

My daddy is the best daddy in the world. He's smart, and handsome, and he loves me and knows me like no man ever will. I know him too. I think it frightens him. I'll never stop loving my daddy, even after he disappears and leaves me alone in the world.

This is my first love. The one that hurts the most. And it shows the way for all my other loves –out the door! Daddy! I love saying that word.

I'm such a sweet little girl. No one can resist me.

Every question has its answer, and every pain has a hug.

- Daddy, pick me up!
- Loli, I'm exhausted, were almost there.
- We've been walking such a long time. Why aren't we there yet?
- It's not much longer. Only one kilometer.
- Oh, my feet hurt... it hurts. I can't walk anymore. Pick me up!
- Loli, I carried you all the way here, and you're not a little girl anymore.
- I am little. My feet are very very little.
- Little but chubby.
- Daddy stop it! Hold me (up)!
- Loli, I'm tired, why don't you take hold of yourself? (now it's time, how about)
- What? (but) I can't do that. Can I?
- Just pick yourself up and walk.
- I won't walk, only in your arms!
- How can you walk in my arms loly?
- Not walk, carry me (up)! Carry me. I can't stand anymore!
- So do a handstand!

- I can't stand. I won't stand on my hand, and I won't stand on my feet! Pick me up! Pick me up! Pick me up! up!

(She slaps on her bateaux)

How embarrassed you were to look me straight in the eyes. In case I might see that your logic doesn't always win. Your logic couldn't bit anger, pain. Pain wasn't you're best teacher. It weakened you and took you from life and from me. Maybe it's better to be illogical like me.

(It's not fair) I don't agree, I disagree! Everyone has a daddy. And I need you to hug me, to explain to me, nobody explains anything to me anymore.

Come back daddy, please come back, I'll be a good girl, I won't lie to mom, it's only because she yells, I get confused. I'll brush my teeth, I'll get a hold of myself, and I won't jump on the couch in the shoes.

I'll let you kiss mom, even on the mouth. Come back daddy, you can see that I'm all alone, and she's not doing me any good. All she does is cry. She doesn't love me! No, she doesn't. So why can't I feel it? Why didn't she die instead of you?

Ok, Sorry. For everything. For everything I didn't do. God, make my daddy come back.

If you could turn that into just nightmare, would it be so complicated?

How come you, who had it all, lost the will to get up in the morning?

And look who's asking, who wants to get up in the morning anyway?

(Wakes up in the morning, dressed. Confused, then understands and starts crying)

What have I done?

Oh my god, (I fall a sleep) Yeah, but...how long could I have slept? Heel up, lifting, moving, lifting. It doesn't feel like anything. I've spoiled it all. I'm such an idiot.

There's nothing left for me to do here. Pack up and go home. Enough with all this bullshit. I'll leave quietly from the backdoor and be like everybody. Elephant riding, water falls ruffling, massages, what do I need all this for. But where can I run to? Can you run away from pain? There must be somewhere.... Oh, I'll go to the teacher. At least he's awake now.

(Lighting changes).

(She walks back to her spot.)

Nothing moves these Asians. He looks at me, half asleep, while I explain him that I went to sleep, stopped the retreat, that I can't deal with this karma. No, he opens his yogurt and start laughing.

The Monk: The meaning of word karma is not faith. It is doing. Karma is faith only in the sense of getting the fruit of your action. When the doing is good the fruit is good. But karma is changing from moment to moment, when you are aware, present moment it remains good. You have a good karma! Vipassana is the best karma! It is the way to end suffering. To overcome anything. Vipassana – seeing things as they are.

Loli: Yeah, whatever, don't you get it, I don't see anything! I have no concentration, I have no breath, I can't do vipassana!

The Monk: Vipassana is not what you want it to be it is not like your supermarket world – “I give this to get that”. Don't do vipassana to feel good or to get something out of it. Can you see you have no breath? You see you have no concentration? Enough! Don't bargain with vipassana; look at things, as they are painful but changing. Pleasant – also changing. Not depending on you, not identifying with you. They are not you! You identify with your pain too much! Look at it from a distance. And don't forget – nothing lasts forever.

Loli: But this pain is really mine; it is in my heart, in my body.

The Monk: This body is not yours! It is born, again and dying without your control. The pain is not yours! You didn't want it, and you can't do anything to stop it!

And he keeps smiling as if its good news.

The Monk: You can only observe it. But even your observation is changing. Don't run away from pain. You are purifying your mind now. Let it out! It

is good you have opportunity to observe pain. You, see? Ending suffering goes through suffering.

Loli: But why?

Monk: Why?

Loli: Why?

The Monk: Why? Why does everything pull you upside down? You cling to anything! Why are you so attached to suffering? The question why won't heal you – observing yes! You have no faith, no confidence. If you cling to suffering it will pass. It must. That's nature! Now go back to your room and meditate! And don't forget to ask forgiveness from all those you've hurt.

Especially your parents.

Loli: Eyze parents? What parents? You don't understand, my mother...

The Monk: There is no kindness like parents' kindness, forgive and forget – so important.

Loli: But...

The Monk: Send love and merit to all living creatures. You're not the only one to suffer. Look, there is a big queue outside. Now go, go... you were your father's beloved daughter.

(She gets up)

Faith and confident. Faith and confident... where from? Standing standing standing. Fear fear fear. Heel up. Lifting. Forwarding. Lowering. Touching. Putting. I wish someone would (to) hold my hand when I meditate.

(Singing in Hebrew) “col haolam culo, hu gesher tsar meod...vehaikar lo lefached clal”

Perhaps I could have saved you. But I was too a young – why didn't you wait? You believed that I was happy and confident enough to survive. You were wrong, Daddy. I've lost my confidence. I grew up sad. You were my strength. Don't you know what kids are like? You left me yearning for a love bigger than life, and there is no such love, anywhere. I miss you. I'm always look for you, walking down your crazy paths, in places where reality is breakable, I create my one, and I don't know who I am anymore.

Who's going to love me, Daddy? There must be a cure, must be. We weren't born to just suffer and die, were we?

The monks say there is a way out of suffering. Through Vipassana. The present, some present... (Remembers) thoughts, all just thoughts. Thoughts. Thoughts.

Standing standing standing. Heel up. Lifting. Forwarding. Lowering. Touching. Pressing. Anxiety anxiety anxiety. Just like that. horror horror horror. I'll carry on no matter what. As much as I can. I have no choice, you're gone, I'm here, and there's no one to save me. I didn't inherit the legacy. I hate blood.

Standing standing standing. Boiling. Boiling, boiling, Heel up. Lifting – you didn't find way out, but I might deed, and I must take my gamble on it. I know it sounds pathetic, nirvana, and all those eastern words but I swear that at times I managed to observe anger, pain, and I felt free... for a minute. But I felt it. Thoughts. Thoughts. Faith and confidence, Loli, standing standing standing.