



Nina Rapi

Playing Yo-Yo at Waterloo Bridge

You're on your way to a Pinter talk at the National.

You've been waiting for this all week.

You've decided to walk all the way from Bermondsey.

You've tried hard to inject a sense of purpose in your step or at least some casual confidence.

It's not a convincing performance. Way off target.

Your head is bent, your shoulders are sunk into your body, dragging you to the ground. You feel like.... No, let's not go down that road. Feelings. Fuck them. Who needs them?

You've reached the bridge. You avoid looking at the Thames.

It's been having an irresistible pull on you of late.

But you can't help yourself. So you look. Naturally, the effect is instant.

A sense of freedom takes you over. Your whole body lifts. You want to jump.

You can't take another day in that rat hole of a building you spend most of your life in. Aggressive investment, passive investment, shrewd investment etc etc; you can't even hear the words without wanting to puke all over them.

They always manage to slip through your fingers though, so you keep looking for ways to pin them down, make them pay their fucking way for all the hassle they cause you. You're good, you know that, that's not the point. You're a good dealer.

It comes naturally to you.

So you've slipped into easiness and now it's slipped into you, wrapped itself around you and become a noose around your neck.

You want out. But how?

Thank God you're still asking questions. The diving impulse is under control.

For a moment. A moment long enough to hook you back into yes, hope. Hope for what? Life for Christ' sake. Feeling it through your bones, your muscles, your...yeah, right, ok, down there, you feel like, sex and feelings, well, they come together these two, like they are connected with an umbilical cord. But they always come to you as abstracts, as things you could, you should desire. But you don't. Well, you do actually, on a level. What level is that? A gnawing at your flesh level, actually. Right, ok.

So, one moment of asking a question saved you, pulled you back, made you re-consider, gave you some clarity.

Moments are good, you think, moments are where it's at. You believe in nothing because there is nothing to believe in. But moments, ok that's something to believe in. Moments have power, moments have possibilities. Things can happen in a moment. Besides, you love this guy, Pinter. He's got guts. He really goes for it. You love the way he manages to pin down all the power games people play and put them up there, on stage, for all the world to see. Yeah, power games, the ones you can easily play but despise, the ones you want to let go of. The man who can tell you a thing or two about them, up there on stage. Lovely. The talk you've been waiting for all week.

So, is there just theatre to look forward to? How stinking sad is this. Wait a second. What did your therapist say? Shift your angle of vision. It's not *what* happens to us but *how* we react to it that matters, she said. So, change perspective. Give the universe a chance to show you how good it can be. She did actually say that, she used these very same fucking words. Ok, give the bloody universe a chance, give it fifteen minutes.

Magic moments, that's where it's at. So you keep your eyes wide open because you know moments are fleeting things, you blink and you miss them. So, you don't blink. You keep your eyes wide open and hope you don't look too strange. You scan the area. What do you see?

You see sinister grayness all around you *but*, and that's the key word here, *but* the grayness is punctured with moving colors. The colors. Ignore the grayness and focus

on the colors. What's that blue and white moving towards you, for example. Bloody hell. She looks good. Bloody hell, she is smiling at you. Jump! Oops, an unfortunate choice of word there. Jump, as in seize the moment, is what is meant here. Talk to her.

You hesitate. Then you smile back. That's good, you've made it.

'Hi,' you say. She looks at you as if she likes what she sees and lingers with a slight question mark in her eyes.

'Hello', she replies and waits.

'Are you going to the Pinter talk at the National?' you say.

'How do you know?' she replies, genuinely surprised. You smile knowingly. She's got 'I'm-going-to-the-Pinter-talk-at-the-National' written all over her.

'I'm psychic,' you say and she laughs. That's it. You made her laugh. You're practically friends. But look closer. She keeps looking at you with curiosity while she laughs. You look back. Your eyes lock. There, you're practically lovers.

'That's where I'm going too,' you say, your voice dropped a few registers.

'Can I walk with you?'

'Sure, why not?'

You walk on the bridge together and you're high as a kite. Who needs coke when you've got a beautiful and intelligent woman next to you, laughing at your jokes.

You're no longer faithless. You now believe in luck, in love, in the goodness of the universe, in God, yes in everything.

'Do you like his work?' you ask.

'I adore it,' she says.

'Did you see Ashes to Ashes a few years ago at the Royal Court?' you ask.

'Did I, indeed,' she replies, 'It was such a punchy double bill with Mountain Language. Unforgettable.'

You'd forgotten about that. You'd just split up with your Serbian girlfriend and that short play was too close to the bone for you, so you've erased it from your memory. You had kept Ashes to Ashes as 'keep as new' in your mind and had assigned Mountain Language to 'delete' function.

You now frantically scan your image bank to repossess one image at least, just in case she asks you anything about it. She doesn't. You are safe. But isn't that an amazing coincidence? Your all time favorite play is hers too. There, you're practically soul mates. You feel like falling on your knees and praying. You want to thank the universe, God, the forces up there, whoever will listen.

'So intense and intimate,' she continues and you're disappearing into her mouth.

You love the way she uses words, the way she moves her lips, her hips, her hands. In fact you love more and more things about her by the second. That's it. You've fallen where you should have fallen. In Love.

'Are you a writer?' she asks. You feel flattered. You've always fancied yourself as a bit of a writer but had never written anything other than financial reports, well ok and a couple of not-bad monologues that got you into the Certificate in Creative Writing at Birkbeck. It was the drama tutor there who got you into Pinter. You liked her. She was tough, knew her stuff, knew what she wanted, you respected that but never finished the course. It scared you. What if you were no good after all? So, the creative stuff went up there, in the 'actualize' department, actualize at a later point when your confidence increased somewhat, when you gave up this job completely, had some free time, met some more writers.

Meanwhile, you've mentally written countless plays and had them successfully staged at small, local stages like the Southwark Playhouse, so no it's not glory you're after, it's getting your ideas, those that come to you late at night when the stocks and shares mindset subsides somewhat, those ideas that this guy Pinter puts across so well, so yes, you're really a writer if we broaden the meaning of the word but no, on second thoughts, let's stay with the strict meaning of the word, you shouldn't lie, lies are not a good basis for a new relationship.

'Actually I'm in finance,' you say shame-faced.

'Oh, that's great,' she replies. 'It's great that people who work in finance are interested in culture'. This girl is smart, you think. God, she's practically flawless.

'My lover is a writer,' she continues and you begin to feel queasy, 'She's a poet actually.'

Slap, punch, stab, stab, stab. You feel cursed, doomed, damned. You feel like shit warmed up, a rat in a hole, a cockroach sprayed with DDD. You feel like turning on

your heels and running. Then, another moment intervenes. You pause. You re-assess the situation. She is a gift, this girl is a gift. She gives you color, she gives you hope, she gives you. She just gives. You start looking for something. Something to write on. You've got nothing. Never mind, it's the urge that matters. Ground yourself, ok what's the date? March 2005. Good. Afternoon, late afternoon, almost evening. Even better. Night is not far off.

You feel in control again. Still, you keep looking for something. You keep diving into your pockets and she looks at you with that slight question mark in her eyes again. Your movements have become manic. You stop for a second and carefully fix that problem, mentally draw a diagram of verticals and horizontals to calm you down.

It works, to a degree. You take a couple of deep breaths. The breathing works.

You feel calmer.

'How long have you been together?' you ask as casually as you can master.

'We've only been together for three months but we're already living together,' she replies beaming. Classic lesbian scenario. The sheer predictability of it! Well, what a disappointment. You want freedom, adventure, endless possibilities not some miserable domestic trap. That's all you'd get with this 'gift' anyway. So. Wake up, pack up and go. Fuck Pinter, fuck culture, fuck love traps, go and earn some more money, you're so good at that. 'No!' you shout and she finds it funny, so she laughs. Your hopes come back to the power of ten. Obviously, girl here likes her random chances. That's all this is about. Random chances. Just go with it, see what happens. Random chances, yes! Who knows, these two might be into threesomes or better still girl here might become your muse, and girlfriend your mentor, your

teacher, the thing you need to move from 'potential' to 'actual' writer. Well, maybe this is *the* moment. There is a problem. You hate poets, something about them. But are you going to let that get in the way of grabbing this unique chance?

'You can meet her if you like. She should be at the theatre bookshop now, waiting for me. She loves coincidences. She'd like to meet you, I'm sure,' she says.

'Yeah, sure,' you say, 'I love poets.'

Author Bio

Nina Rapi's plays and monologues include: *Kiss the Shadow*, Lyric Theatre, Royal Festival Hall, Soho Theatre; *Reasons to Hide*, Tristan Bates Theatre; *Lovers*, Gielgud Theatre, West End Shorts Season; the award-winning *Angelstate*; *Edgewise*, National Theatre of Greece & Gate Theatre; *Mrs Jones Matters*, Porto, Portugal; *Ithaka*, Best Play Award, BITS Festival, Pirani, India. Her first collection of short stories, *Nine Traces in a Circle*, was published in Greece. Her new collection, *Out Where* (Arts Council award) is near completion. Essays on her work have been published internationally. Nina.Rapi is also the Founding Editor of BRAND Literary Magazine.

Citation: Rapi, N. 2011. 'Playing Yo-Yo at Waterloo Bridge'. *Polari Journal*, 3 (April 2011), www.polarijournal.com/resources/Rapi-Yo-Yo.pdf (accessed <insert date>).