

# Can You Hear Me?

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The truck comes out of nowhere. One minute the road is empty. Then 20 tonnes of screaming steel is crumpling her bonnet. Soft, vulnerable flesh is forced into leather seats, the airbag explodes in her face. Darkness, a distant scream fades into silence broken only by the tinkling of cooling metal...

Flashing lights. A voice calling "Can you hear me? Open your eyes!" She tries... too hard...

"Lift on 3. 1, 2 3!" Her body sears with pain. A small gasp escapes her lips. Again the insistent voice, "Can you hear me? You're in the hospital. Everything is OK. You're gonna be fine."

A light is shone in her eyes. Someone forces open her eyelid. She moves her head to avoid the light. Pain radiates through her body, engulfing her like a ravenous beast.

"Can you hear me?"

A small prick in her arm and the beast recedes into the darkness with a protesting growl.

A familiar smell. Manly and inviting. She tries to investigate. Nothing moves. Noises from her left, a change in the light as something moves in front of her.

"Lucy. Can you hear me? It's Andrew." Of course it is, no one else smells that good. She tries a smile. Something works. The resulting noise is half chuckle, half sob. A finger gently strokes the side of her face as she slips back into darkness.

The light is softer, more inviting. The noises less threatening. Again that wonderful familiar smell bringing with it memories of warm sand and sun sparkling on the ocean. She reaches her hand towards it, the pain almost bearable. Gentle fingers engulf hers infusing warmth and love.

The voices are close. Snatches of the conversation seep into her brain.

"The point is... What if... Are you absolutely certain... You'll have to accept..."

"I can hear you," her mind screams. "Talk to me."

This time the pain is less. The intrusive finger is pulling at her eyelid again, torchlight intruding into her brain. "Can you hear me? Open your eyes."

She forces her eyes to open. The left one responds valiantly, the right less inclined.

"Welcome back. Do you know where you are?" A slight nod, lips moving, nothing coming out. A straw is slid between her lips. The effort to suck is enormous but the reward immense.

"Hospital." The word is barely audible. Another suck on the straw.

"Bad?" There is a notable silence.

"I'll get the doctor." The voice leaves.

Her eyes scour the room. No one. Her brain explores her body. The feedback is minimal. Two figures enter. One is recognisable, welcome, the other unknown.

Andrew sits beside her, taking her hand. Tousled hair, shadows around eyes, label sticking out of his jacket collar. Unknown speaks in low tones. The words hover in the air before her. Paralysis, brain damage, spine... nothing really makes sense. The important thing is Andrew is here.

"Thanks Doctor Rider," Andrew says. Unknown leaves the room.

"Mirror?" Andrew holds up his phone. The bruising is changing from black to purple. A jagged scar reaches from eyebrow to chin.

"You look much better," Andrew says reading her expression. "The bruising will turn yellow soon. You always look great in yellow." His hand squeezes tight. A single tear slides down her cheek.

"Love you."