

Ups and downs

There are days when the weather is good – not cloudy and definitely not freezing, the rain is very far in the distance, and you almost get the feeling that you're someplace else, maybe subtropical. Those days are long, the sun stays around until almost ten, so once you're done with work you can eat dinner, something light, and go for a walk, in short sleeves. The soft breeze against your skin taps you gently and you feel alive. You realize how lucky you are – to be here, strolling carefree – breezy, you think. When you get home, you fix yourself a drink, maybe with fresh mint or limes, ice cubes. The world around you pauses so that you can enjoy the present; you are grateful and you come close to that pause button, you want to suspend this moment in time, because here and now everything makes sense. Your life is yours, your choices were right, your friends are dependable, your spouse is funny, your cooking is flavourful, your plants grow, and your mind is free of doubts. You believe all those adages: that you are where you were meant to be, that everything you have done has led to this moment of truth, up on this mountain, where the view is clear. You breathe it all in, because you know that this will be over before you realise, and you need to savour this, save the memory for when you need it.

There will be days – lots and lots of them – when the weather will wear you down, you will buy pyjamas in bulk, you will not open the windows, you will shiver your way out of bed and into your dressing gown. You have a busy day of work, and you think how lucky you are to have a job, and wonder if that will be enough. A headache may be simmering in the background, but you will look ahead and take deep breaths and boil water for tea, coffee, mate, lemon slices. A heap of laundry will need sorting –whites, darks, delicates – and you will think it will never be entirely washed and dried and folded and put back where it belongs. And you will look at the floor and wonder whether you actually vacuumed the day before. You'll spill your tea bumping into someone. And someone will look at you funny on the street, and you won't know if it was because you're speaking Spanish, and whether that bothers them for some reason. It will be your best friend's or your sister's birthday and you will miss them, and you will send them a message, you will wait until the time is right to call them, what with the time difference, but you won't talk for too long, because you know other people want to call them too, or might even stop by to see them in person. You will take these crumbs of life and tell yourself that you're not starved. You will watch more tv than you think you should, you will eat an extra slice of cake, the frosting too, you will wish you were somewhere else. You will try to make decisions, you will doubt them all, you will

tell yourself to be patient. To wait. Until the wheel turns and you feel complete again. You remember the perfect days and wonder if they were ever true. You buy a plane ticket, a warm sweater, an expensive loaf of artisan bread. You buy plans and hopes and try to stay positive. You tell yourself lies and truths. You are doing your best. While you wait for the good days to take you by surprise.