

...Can you see me?... I'm right here, next to you. If you reach out a little bit, you can even touch me. Can you see? There's less and less of me each time you look. If you blink, you might miss me altogether.

There used to be a lot more of me. You must remember. A long time ago. Do you remember? Can you see me now? I shed myself bit by bit, becoming lighter, so that you can fly even higher. Maybe you remember now? This is what's left of me. Didn't you notice? Did you think you had a natural talent for flying? That you were born to fly? Did you think it was magic? Look again. Here I am. I'm still where I was when you last looked. I lose myself slowly. Don't look away. Each time you look back, I'm more difficult to find. As you rise further and the air becomes thinner, I become invisible.

I love you with my whole body and with all my soul. You are at the beginning and at the end of every thought of mine. You are part of me. I am part of you.

In the beginning, we had a perfect rhythm, a perfect balance. We saw the same vision, the same future. We were one. Our love grew deeper, sharper, softer, smoother. You could hear my thoughts. I dreamt your smile, my eyes, on a baby's face.

So many dreams had been growing inside me all my life, in beautiful colour. I could see the future even before you came into my life. The road ahead was endless. I could run, I could climb, I could fly. My wings grew long thick feathers. I had so much to show the world. The air around me vibrated with excitement. You were already in my future.

When our children grew inside me, you looked at me with great tenderness, touched my belly softly and deeply, made me cry with silent joy. I was a miracle. Your miracle. Our miracle. You rushed home just to breathe the same air, just to see this endless wonder. I drifted, wrapped in ecstasy.

When I was a girl I knew I would become a princess. When I was a teenager I was going to be Marilyn Monroe, Simone de Beauvoir, Joni Mitchell, Karen Blixen, Patti Smith, George Sand, Madonna. When I was a woman I was going to be the best there ever was. I would surprise the world. People would point their fingers at me and whisper with admiration. They would want to be me. Look at me now. Can you see me at all?

Our children are our own personal miracle. I had been waiting for them to arrive ever since I myself was a child. I dreamt of a future with you and the children always in the background. You can't dream limits. You never notice how little space there is for all your wishes. Each year I become less. How can you dream **that**?

Believe me, I have no regrets. I would do it all over again. And again. What I have now is more precious than dreams. **But can you see me? Do you still remember my dreams?** Do you still remember how I was when I was whole? Have I faded into the background? Can you see me?

I have always put you first. Stand by your man? No. That isn't me. I am stronger than you think. I spread your wings for all of us. Do you ever think of my dreams when your dreams come true? For you, I learnt to dream in darker colours. I left tiny pieces of hope behind, like dust, wherever I went.

Could **you** give up your dreams? When you lose dreams, your soul bleeds. Can you imagine the pain? The clock won't wait for me. Give me back some time. Time for me. You be invisible for once. Can you still see me? What is left of me? You shine like bright stars and I am a shadow.

My heart talks in circles of chaos. This is my pain. This is my anger. Do you know what it's like to be a woman? The pain of childbirth lasts forever. Who will I be in the end? My dreams are gone. I am hollow, invisible.

Can you still see me? What **do** you see when you look at me? A mother? A carer? A companion? When I step out of the shower, naked and wet, does your heart beat faster? When you look at me, do you see a princess, an adventuress, an artist, a writer, a sex goddess? Am I focus or background? Why do I need to ask? Can you see yourself through my eyes now? Do you know what it's like to be invisible? Can you see me? Can you really see me?

I am the silence in the background of other people's lives. I am an illusion of weakness with endless strength. No one sees me, but they would notice if I was gone. No one asks what I dream at night. Are you shocked? When you come home at night, I wait for you to run to me and kiss me, hold me so tight that I can hardly breathe. Do you see me standing there? Can you see me at all?

Your wings are strong. My wings have lost all their feathers. I watch you fly. You never look down. I dream with my eyes closed. Open your eyes. Can you see me? Can anyone see me?

Talk to me. Tell me you see me. Cry over my broken dreams. Be happy for the dreams we have. Remember what I was. Let me fly. Fade into the background for once. Do you dare? Do you love me enough to do this? Do you love me enough to say you would? Do you know how much I love you? Who am I? Do you feel my breath on your skin when you sleep? Do you see me in your dreams? Do you see me at all?