



STAY

Nele Van den Broeck

Stay. Cling to this life like a bumblebee clings to her sting.

Stay. I know your pain. I know you're desperate, that you've tried everything, that you think this sorrow will never fade. But sooner or later, it will – it has to. Even the biggest waves will eventually crash into a strip of foam on the sand. Stay like the coastline – always there, always changing.

Stay. Even if your heart is broken and your hope has dimmed. Even if the cold fire of fear burns relentlessly in your stomach, like the Olympic flame of that eternal competition with yourself. Stay.

Stay. Even if it won't get better, you'll get better at it. This too shall pass. I promise. I can make that promise because I was there myself. For years, I tried to excel, I chased fame, I made money, and I clung to love like it was the very last life buoy on a sinking ship, hoping to rid my days of that never-ending pounding in my brain, that pain. Always. That pain.

I tried to bargain with the pain, paint it pink, and appease it with new goals, deadlines, or mindsets, but to no avail, until I had exhausted every option but to curl up on the floor and cry. I prayed to every demon and deity I could think of. Please. Help. I was where you are now. It was a close call. But I stayed. I'm still here.

Stay. There is a future, whether near or distant, in which you will be happy. Even if you've had the worst year imaginable. Stay. Even if you've played all your cards and lost every game. You're still sitting at the table. The game is just a game. Stay.

Stay. Grieve. Cry your eyes out, and then put them back in your head. Have a coffee with your loneliness. Take a walk with your sorrow. Or just stay in bed. It's okay. Everything is okay, as long as you stay. Stay in the fire. Hatch a dragon.



Stay. That's all you need to do today. You don't need to feel good. You don't have to work, be productive, have a mission or find a passion. The only thing you need to do today is stay. You're not the one who makes the flowers grow. You can water, prune, weed and till. But not right now. Let the ground lie fallow today. Spring will come.

Stay. I mean it. I need you to stay today. The future needs you to stay today. You are not lost. You are playing hide-and-seek with yourself. Close your eyes and count to ten. You're still there. I see you. Stay.

