

For nearly six months now Adrian has been listening to Elias Cole's story. Cole has been using him as confessor. The question is why. In Adrian's experience it isn't unknown for a patient endeavouring to conceal an uncomfortable truth – from themselves as much as anyone else – to confess something lesser. The therapist is handed the role of judge and juror. If he accepts the version of events presented, the patient sees himself as absolved. page 374

....

In these idle moments, to him anything but mundane, the physical separation between them ceases to exist.

... When she rises to fetch a glass of water, he feels a moment of loss and he knows he never wants to be without her again and he says so. But she, standing with her back to him, fails to hear above the rain and the sound of pouring water and so gives no answer. page 378

She was tenacious, aggressive as lover, had tried to prise the pieces of him apart. Only when she failed had she finally let go, by then months had passed. She loved like she was going to war, but she was also not the kind of woman to wait for a man. Valiant in battle, noble in defeat. She walked away and never looked back. page 380

How easily they spoke of love. And yet, when she'd needed the certainty of his feeling for her, he'd let her slip away, never able to bring himself to tell her about the way in which he'd been changed. He'd been incapable, and in being incapable, he'd let Nenebah believe the problem lay with her. page 385

He has reached an age, he realises, when he considers manual labour to be somehow rewarding. Today in particular he welcomes the refuge it offers; concentrating upon his hands forces him beyond the vortex of his own thoughts. page 390

'Helped? Have you helped?'

Now Adrian feels a small stardust of anger. 'Yes', he says to put an end to it. He looks directly at Kai at the same time as Kai looks up. Their eyes meet. In Kai's face there is cold rage (...) He says, 'You have nightmares.'

Another shrug. 'Who doesn't?'

'Plenty of people. The occasional bad dream, perhaps. But not recurrent nightmares. Not nightmares that stop you sleeping for nights on end. Not nightmares that result in insomnia - chronic insomnia, that is - so that your functions are impaired the next day.' page 422

He is walking down the corridor of the hospital, stepping over the bodies of men, the chemical scent of blood in the air. The background noise is of shouted orders, gurney wheels, the whimpered groans of the wounded. behind the sound of human voices comes the drum roll of machine gunfire, the bass note of mortars in the and in the east of the city. page 427

She was dying, not yet dead when he carried her to the vehicle. He was ordered in the back and struggled to her over the tailgate. Nobody helped him; they watched him and screamed at him. He was terrified of failing, of being made to leave her behind. The city was burning. He felt the heat of the fires on his naked skin, the broken glass in the soles of his feet. The rebels were in retreat. He climbed up into the back and cradled Balia in his arms. page 433

The Memory of Love, Aminatta Forna, 2010, paperback 2011, Bloomsbury, London