

FRANKIE: Mum. I passed! Yeah, yeah I know. Yeah, I'm going out to celebrate. But I've got to write a card for someone first. Someone who helped me to really begin to get what this job is about. He's someone who's just been awarded his PhD. No. Not in Psychotherapy. In Theoretical Physics. No. No idea. It's like a completely different language. I feel really stupid when he tries to tell me about it ... Yes, I suppose it is. I never realised before, Mum. Hey Mamma ... Grazie.

Frankie walks back to Consultation Room 2, holding a certificate.

FRANKIE: (Voiceover) I still can't believe I passed. And I certainly can't believe what I discovered on the way. I feel I have been like the people No Violet Bulawayo describes – the people who are busy looking at your falling. I don't even have the excuse of only speaking English. And that question Malik asked me at the end of the last session: What would it be like for me if I did my therapy sessions with Italian people in Italian? I've never thought about it before. I might not know the right words. And I might feel like a fraud. I only know how to be a therapist in English. English seems like a proper language. In Italian I would feel like I was making things up. What about if the client sounded like my grandma? How would I even keep a straight face?

Anyway, Valerie, Christine's client, is having her last session today and apparently there is a surprise for me. (Opens door. Goes into Consultation Room 2).

CHRISTINE: This work. It takes the whole of us to do it. The way we deal with our fears, our foolishness and our shame is probably 80% of what we can give our clients. And your 80% will be different from mine. Your experience of growing up in a multilingual family is not something I share. You have something to offer that I don't. I think you get that now. I think you would know what to do if you were in my shoes and if this was your last session with Valerie. What do you think?

Dissolve to an imagined session between Frankie and Valerie in Consultation Room 2.

FRANKIE to VALERIE: Is this OK with you, Valerie? (Valerie nods.)

So, like I asked, would you let me say a few words to your mother in English for you to translate for me? I am not asking you to produce any of your own speech – all you would have to do is to translate mine. Little children do it all the time for their parents. Can we have a go and see what happens?

VALERIE: (doubtfully) OK .

(They set up a chair and place a photo of Valerie's mother Shuqing on it.)

FRANKIE: Shuqing, thank you for coming here today. I would like to ask you a question

VALERIE: (Haltingly translates into her language)

VALERIE: (In English) Did I just fall into a trap?

FRANKIE: I think you just remembered not to forget.

(Frankie picks up paper and reads out loud.)

FRANKIE: "If you leave your country and begin to speak a new language, you may still experience symptoms of language loss and attrition, but it is unlikely that you will truly forget your mother tongue". That is from a paper I read.

That's an interesting word - attrition. To be worn down. I wonder if that is how you feel?

Pause.

You know some people forget their languages because they need to forget. Because the pain is too much for them in that language. But that language can also hold your joy too.

What would it feel like now if you were just to imagine saying the words “I love you” in your mother’s language, your language, to your partner?

VALERIE: We would never say those words in Chinese. That's not how we usually express love, especially not romantic love. I don't think I ever heard my mother say those words. It's hard to imagine her actually saying those words out loud.

FRANKIE: But the feeling is still there. What happens to the feeling when you imagine it? Does it have any words, for you?

VALERIE: You mean - can I really dare to feel those words in my heart?

FRANKIE: And can you really dare to say those words to your partner, in the language of your heart.

Fade down and fade up on the quote which is also voiced.

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart?” - Nelson Mandela