



**Élodie Torrente**

Élodie Torrente, author and journalist by trade, writes short stories – her fetish format – and novels since 2008. Her passion for words and people leads her to animate writing workshops for young and old, all year long. Her latest novel, *VOSTER* (Original version with French subtitles), is published by NDB Editions (2018).



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## Les Cures Marines

Boulevard de la Cahotte  
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BEDTIME STORY BY MGALLERY

# A Haven of Peace

Élodie Torrente

A story inspired by



shortédition

# A Haven of Peace

## “You really need to give

yourself a total break, my dear. Why not try the sea spa at Trouville? It would be perfect for you. They do thalassotherapy, there’s a spa and a Michelin restaurant”. So Sophie took her mother’s advice: after the forty eight hours she had just lived through, three days of pampering might help her steer clear of a psychiatric clinic in the longer term.

As soon as she stepped into the reception in the Trouville complex, she could understand her mother’s opinion. Ancient stone artfully mixed with designer furniture helped her immediately feel calmer. With its clean lines and muted colours the whole place was an invitation to tranquillity. Her pulse felt as if it was finally slowing down for the first time in forty-eight hours. She went down the corridor towards the lobby where a polite and friendly blonde woman welcomed her, showing no curiosity about the marks on the new visitor’s face. With the key to room 402 in her hand, Sophie took the elevator knowing her luggage would follow. Luckily she met no one on her way up. It had been the right idea to book during the week when there were fewer people. But within a few minutes of emerging from the lift, she was thrown into a panic. Down the plush but lowkey corridor that led to her room, she thought she recognised the man she could see in the distance. Her heart began beating faster and the tick in her right cheek started up again. As the man came closer, however, she calmed down: from five metres away she could see he looked nothing like the man she was running from.

An hour later, leaning on the metal rail of her terrace, looking out over the port of Trouville, her breathing came easier. Refreshed by the sea air and feeling the warmth of the spring sun, she asked herself if what she had gone through at home on Sunday had been for real. How had her clever, sensitive husband who she had lived with for ten years been able to change so much in just a few months?

Was it her promotion in January that had sparked this jealousy? Where did this violence come from, that had provoked this gentle soul of a man to lock her up, then beat her up before stabbing the neighbour who had come to help her? The questions overwhelmed her, with no answers in sight. She watched some couples walking along the quayside, hand in hand, four floors down. Her heart missed a beat: she would never again have that sort of closeness with her husband who had gone completely crazy. With the back of her hand she brushed away the tears that had begun rolling down her cheeks and then, to keep herself from plunging down into a dark pit of grief, she set to and tidied away her clothes in the wardrobe. After showering, she left her room to go down to the spa, imagining that a good massage would help dispel all her anxious fear.

In shock over her recent experience, she hadn’t noticed, when she passed by the first time, the Marguerite Duras quote in the corridor of the fourth floor. Nicely designed in italics, the words from the famous writer described how the loneliness of writing helped her in her work. She thought that there is nothing better than solitude to help recover from major unhappiness. Her violent – and necessary – separation from a husband, him being taken into custody and maybe even locked up was so inconceivable to her that she could hardly believe it had happened. But looking at herself in the mirror of the lift, the bruises on her cheeks told her it was all horribly true. She was a woman on her own now, scarred, a million miles from the life she’d had and with no idea at all of what the future might hold for her. Would he be let out on bail? And if he was, where would she live because of course no life together with him was ever going to be possible again. On the third floor a couple in their forties got into the lift and smiled hello at her. The understanding they seemed to share touched her. She took deep breaths to fight back more tears and when she got down to the spa she signed up for an early afternoon massage. Then she headed back up to reception and into the huge hotel bar, which was flooded with light from the tall Beaux Arts windows. She ordered a milky coffee. The tranquility of the place began to restore her sense of peace to the point when she could even begin to see her husband’s face as it used to be before being transformed by hatred. As long as they didn’t let him out of custody! Once out, he would do everything possible to find her, crazy with anger that she had cried for help and, in so doing, had provoked this act of bloodshed.

After two days at the spa she began, bit by bit, to calm down. Little by little the scenes of violence began to fade from her mind. The sun, the kindness of the staff and the imaginative dishes in the restaurant all helped her to find herself again. She was due to leave the following day, and renewed with fresh strength, she felt ready to face the world. Or at least that’s what she thought while she was still inside this oasis of calm.

On her last evening, Sophie ate in the restaurant and buoyed up by several glasses of Pouilly-Fuissé wine went back up towards her room smiling. Her mobile rang and she saw it was a text from a blocked ID: “Good idea to go to

that hotel in Trouville”. It was him. She knew it. The carefree effects of the alcohol disappeared in a second. How had he found her? A bead of sweat appeared on her forehead and she wiped her sweaty hands on her dress.

Completely shaken by the text she wandered through the maze of corridors, looking for her room, getting lost and ending up at the other end. Shaking, with her legs turning to jelly, she turned round and as she did so she thought she saw a shadow on the wall. She began to run, tottering on her high heels, until she arrived at her door where in utter panic she looked for the key in her bag. Still not finding it she fumbled frantically inside and then despite the fact she heard footsteps coming dangerously close she chucked the contents of the bag out on the floor to see where it was. No luck. With desperate, gasping breaths she grabbed all her things, got up and with her shoes in one hand, bag in other she was about to stride off towards the lift when a strong hand took hold of her shoulder. Her blood went cold and she felt right on the edge of total collapse. Just then she heard a polite voice ask: “Is everything alright, Miss? The restaurant staff asked me to bring you your key. You left it behind on your table”. With her hair sticking to her sticky forehead, and her makeup streaked down her white face, she grabbed the bit of magic from him and opened her door, without even saying thank you. Once safe inside her room, she collapsed, crying as she had never cried before. Later, with her phone in airplane mode, she finally managed to get to sleep by focusing her mind on all the goodness she had absorbed in the fresh sea air of the spa.

The next morning, when she woke, terrified at the idea that he might be close by, Sophie packed her things. At reception, she asked them to call her a taxi and while she waited, she sat down in one of the swivel chairs in the hall and grabbed her phone. The text was still there and she opened it. In her terror she hadn’t read the whole message and now with her heart beating and her breath tight she read the whole message right to the end. Then with a determined step she got up and turned back to reception.

The taxi was cancelled. The bellboy took her luggage back upstairs. Fifteen minutes later, sitting next to the piano in the bar she rang her lawyer to thank him. Thanks to his text she could breathe again. With her husband behind bars she could dream of her own new future. She ordered a fruity cocktail to celebrate her freedom and looking out through the huge glass windows, she finally could make the most of the calm of her new haven of peace.

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