

03 – A visceral reaction (Pain)

I told him that I had writer's block. He turns to look at me.

I lie down beside him and toy with his chest hair as he tells me that writer's experienced this when they were out of touch with their emotions. I told him that it would just fall into place, that blocks were overcome just like that. I thought about what he said, and I thought about what the words meant.

It was true to an extent. I often think that there is a thin veil surrounding me from the rest of the world and they serve to cut off my emotions. This does not happen overnight you see. It happens over time, with repeated experiences. This was of course, my body's own doing. A defence mechanism of sorts. If you do not let emotions in, then you will no longer be sad. The only downside was you then no longer felt happy as well.

My doctor said the same of SSRIS. Antidepressants for you boomers.

Perhaps I should start listening to the people around me, even they were white men.

I walked back to my house in the morning amidst joggers and grey cloudy skies. My body shivered and I felt *lighter*.*

**Post-nut clarity – A common phrase coined by young adults to express renewed vigour and/or clearer thinking after having sex following a prolonged period of not having a sexual partner.*

I showered and went to work.

I thought about how detached my body had become from my emotions. I could now let my body feel. In these times, I close my mind because the moment I let it in, thought becomes repetitive urges that bind me to mere human emotions. This is not a way to live forever but it is enough at least for now to engage from the sidelines.

Being well-behaved was never one of my strong suits. So, here I am, writing out of spite.

Bite this, baby.

He told her that her jeans were cool.

Karmacoma – Massive Attack played in the bar.

Charlie was brought back to 3 months ago, back to another in a different country, with a different person who had the same things to say and the same look.

He told her that her skirt looked good.

Life is no fun when you're the smartest in the room. It is no fun at all to gauge a response before it is said.

Isn't it crazy that we're in the midst of multiple wars, world economies are slowly but surely crumbling, people have lost faith in their governments across the world and climate change is a reality now?

And so, we are all plant-based from the food we eat to the weed we smoke.

Now, with all that gloomy perspective, let us all talk about how capitalism has shaped our society as we sit in our share house backyard.

Charlie slept in her own pool of shame and guilt. She was back to playing the same game.

After waking up for the umpteenth time on a hospital bed, she felt that it was time to stop with the death antics.

Now, how did this realization come to be; you may ask?

Simple really, it is no longer fashionable to kill yourself at the age of 25.

Now, readers, don't be fooled, the best stories follow her wherever she goes, such is the life a self-loving (self-deprecating) writer with a quarter life crisis.



Tate, London, Jan 2023

Women of colour knew pain, with their strong forearms and words of unheeded advice to their progressive children.

Priorities are important, because whilst there are loads of fish in the water, there is trash and then there is toxic waste that kills everything in its path. Women of the newer age were strong in their conviction, everyone poured their love onto her and in her haste, she overlooked this nonchalantly. That the women in her life were strong, brave and best of all, kind.

Hot girls do not cry over ugly men. Period.

Show some decorum Charlie. Eat, pray, love minus the problematic middle aged white woman bit where she finds herself in a third world country.

Charlie finally thought about love, the kind that lingered afterwards.

She thought about the boy with dilated pupils who sat on the concrete drain with her, looking at symmetrical shapes on the sky with his dilated pupils whilst discussing Pascal's Wager, hallucinations vivid and tremors alike. He carried her on his back as they walked barefoot in the park, broken glass bottles everywhere. He looked at her like she was his whole world, no one had looked at her like that before.

In the future (yet to be realised), it was another boy who sat with her on the sidewalk as they watched people tumble out of the house party drunk and spilled loudly onto the streets. He listened to her as she spoke to him, or maybe he just looked at her thoughtfully.

And then in a further future, it was another boy who took her away from the parties and laid with her on white sheets, discussing intersectional feminism and heroin.

I have to get away, I cannot stand still, this is my last mistake. No more sitting down, it will be a lay and a leave.



Sometimes, she referred to herself as Charlie and other times, it was Charlotte. Names did not matter unless you did, yourself.

I weigh 42 kg.

The doctor said that I was massively underweight.

{1 month later}

I weigh 44 kg now.

Minimal progress but still a step ahead.

I want to fade away until there is nothing left, nothing but the bones on my back searing slowly through my sinned skin.

The doctor called me a slight young woman and I thought about how old people spoke. I must seem ancient to the people younger than me.

I now weigh 46 kg. Double digit progressing sequences seem to be the one hitting the spot.

Charlie sighs visibly, drawing gazes from her colleagues in her office.

She looked at the screen in front of her, yet another rich person. She looked at her bank account, it showed \$1.08.

The screen in front of her showed \$1.08 million.

These thoughts are impenetrable and uncontrollable, unleashing themselves as they see fit.

There is attempted crying and then there is abysmal self-pitying.

It then turns into a heavy numb feeling, lead spreading slowly all over my body, turning everything into one. Suddenly, you can hear silence and your heartbeat. Your mind empties and you can no longer feel your fingers or toes.

The emotional rollercoaster subsides, and the heavy feeling settles.

It feels like a slow lumbering weight that slowly washes over your body. One minute you are fine, complacently normal. The next minute, you cannot leave the bed, and everything tastes the same. You feel nothing, having lost all sense of your own self.

This is what it is, the feeling of melting into your bed, into nothing.

Every day feels like the one before, constantly lost in your own thoughts.

The first doctor gave me a paper test, summed the numbers and declared me clinically depressed. He had an odd name, Dr Joy or something like that. All I could remember was the sky, it was drizzling grey that day as I glanced out the window.

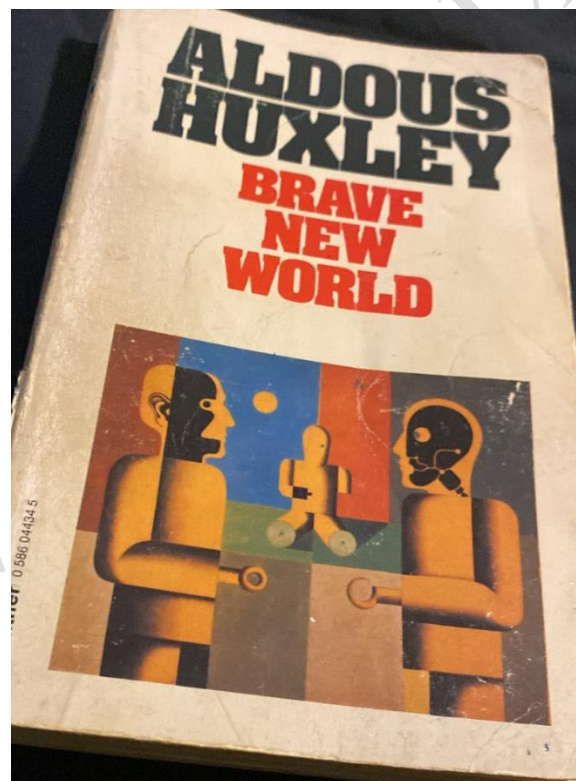
My current therapist says this is when I am detached and have to anchor myself to reality, I need to get more grounded but again, I digress. Who listens to their therapist anyway?

He also said something incredulous that snapped me out of my reverie. He said I needed vitamin D, now that was when I knew I was depressed. So depressed that even my fucking melanin gave up on

me, I was always awake only at night and in the dark, amidst curtains draw tight. To this day, it has never left and I can no longer put the blame on it. I am reminded every day of nothing, my mind is blank and my breathing is shallow. These days, I wake up with blood in my mouth and noises in my stomach and yet, I feel like I am underwater, trapped like a shark in the aquarium.

Can you actually believe that my brown skin is melanin deprived? I mean, come on, this is when you know shit has hit the fan, am I right or am I fucking right?

Melanin and melatonin. My body is lacking.



I told him to fuck off.

He said to read a bit of Huxley.

I smirked and thought of him as Bernard.

I was beginning to adopt the pretentiously vulgar personality, associated with obsessive reading.

I mean, who am I to be quoting Huxley? In my thrift store clothes and arrogant mind.

I will do things purely out of spite.

I will quit this stagnant routine.

I know, time to stop being the turgid asshole, hidden in these trenches that I've grown.

I will walk on the grey London pavements and melt into my shoegaze music. I did do that and I'm still where I was two years ago, on my bedroom floor, on a different carpet.

When I roll my cigarettes in Europe, I will think about how you taught me how to roll my first cigarette and how to inhale.

"Wait, are you smoking?" he gestured to my cigarette and gave a nervous nod.

I laughed. "You want one?" I say as I zip my pack into my bag, slung diagonally across my chest. I think of how you taught me all the wrong things and shook my head at him.

"You're a doctor!"; I exclaimed.

"So, people need to live a little, enjoy life", he chuckled.

I walked in the house and thought about doctors as actual people. All this time, they had existed in my mind as separate entities, almost untouchable in their healing prowess.

They were assholes, just like the rest of us.

Some of them were gems, like my best friend. Some were simply strangers and therefore, in my young mind, deserving of careless words thrown across.

Nothing is real anymore, the mask falls.

The Japanese say you have three faces. The first face, you show to the world. The second face, you show to your close friends, and your family. The third face, you never show anyone. It is the truest reflection of who you are.

How I never needed a drink before you.

Now, I am dying of starvation, the first few glasses are like water for a dehydrated man.

I find myself choosing between drink and food, self-loathing has etched itself onto my very being.

I caught myself in an AA meeting today, shy a few months away from my 25th birthday. You see, I've become just like you, like my father, like this cycle that I am constantly in.

Howell once made a passing remark to Charlie.

He said, "I don't understand how people can be addicted to alcohol".

Charlie laughed on the phone, she felt sordidly alone in her misery because a drink was not merely a drink, how could she explain that it was an escape? That life was so horrible, and any escape was a valid one.

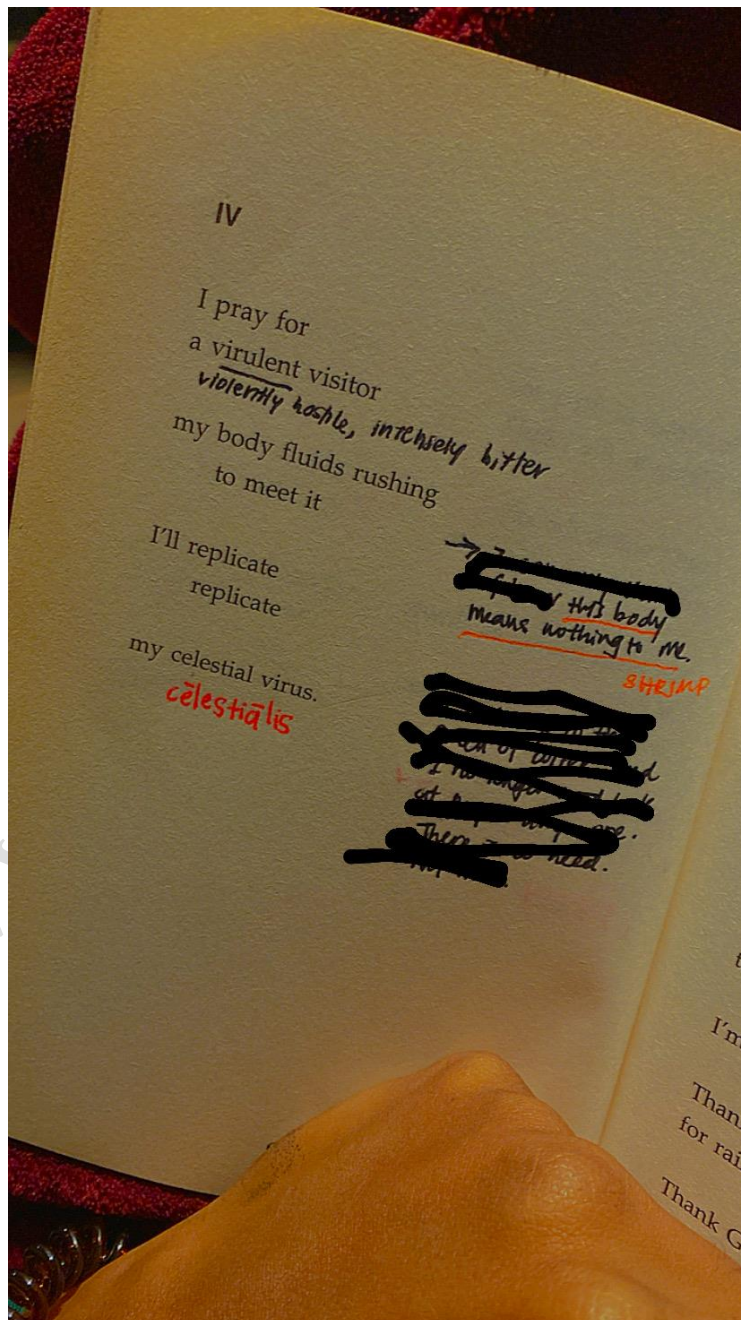
That it was her choice and at the same time, it was not. That addiction was cool until it wasn't.

Or a cigarette. I will never forgive you for this.

Everything was distorted, so were you.

This was how Charlie found herself on her bed, quite decidedly out of her mind, checking weather conditions and booking flight tickets for Berlin.

She knew she had to breathe into her own life and not fixate on her illustrious tendencies.



I was not always, well to be frank, a mean person.

I can promise you; this was forged through my personal extended experience of being a doormat.

I have genuinely become disillusioned with the whole nine yards. Ten yards even actually.

Oh, please tell me you laughed at that.

Tiny shake of your head?

Miniscule grin?

Well, Charlie could not give a single fuck because she loves her lame jokes.

Why do I feel like it is a defining characteristic of our generation is to, both secretly have the co-star app installed on our phones and yet openly belittle astrology in the conversation space? Don't you? In this instance, yes, I am referring to the generation that hates bugs, not so much the online ones.

Here, we shall embark upon Charlie's real-life experience because according to her, "If I have to live through this shit, then everyone else needs to read about it!".

This is a verbatim quote lifted on Charlie herself, whilst explaining the purpose of publishing her writings to a kind co-worker.

She finds herself surrounded by imbeciles, parental figures and outstanding peers. Fortunately, the line is hanging on a thread, and this makes for the best stories.

90% of people I meet comment on my smile. Ponder that.

Well, it's either that or they tell me about how hot I am. Oh' but I confess I revel in that tiny shake of my head that never fails to validate them

Fuck, maybe Charlie was stupid. After all, beauty fades, maybe then she will be left with nothing but her own mistakes catching up to her.

I can barely pack it in, the sheer unadulterated restlessness that seems to have cemented itself within my fingers, toes, and thoughts.

Alcohol will be the death of me. You have got to be the smirking cynic in this instance.

I swear to God I've tried.

I am impatient every single moment of my life. These days when I hear people talk, I promptly turn into a cynic where I always think my own rationales are superior. I suppose that I have turned into an old person, deluded and cemented in their obstinate opinions.

He looked down at my socks and remarked, "They don't even match!". Charlie honestly did not fucking care, this person opposite to her did not know the difference between melanin and melatonin. That just stood out in her mind as ignorance and again, she took this feeling to be an air of superiority. She does get too far ahead of herself these days and is attempting to become a better person, to lounge in her fortitude of solitude.

She has a corduroy dark maroon long sleeved shirt on, sleeves rolled twice because that was just cool. Her legs are hugged by fading black jeans but no one notices the cigarette shaped hole on the lower leg calf, no one sees a horrible reminder every day. All they see is her non-existing ass, cupped tightly by her double 00 supermodel ass.

Shall we start at Charlie's 22nd birthday where she ran away into the trees, with no real recollection the next day and only remembering having ruined her fishnet tights because she kept running into the woods? She had a birthday party with 25 people and on that day, she realised that when her close friends left, she was stuck with people that she did not actually need.

I downed my tequila shot as I had had enough of everyone's obnoxious flirting and overprotectiveness. I got up and started running up the stairs and out of the club. I ran across the streets and when I turned my head back for a glance, I saw them miniscule in the distance, obscure.

If I must live through all this shit, then you are going to have to read about it no doubt.

Maybe then, my life would not have been a complete waste of space.

(Maybe)

I am so tired. I would like to disappear into my bed, the world is moving too fast around me. If I do not pick up my pace, I will be left in the wake of dust. Gold has fallen upon me again. It would be good, if only I didn't have the Midas touch.

It is eye opening being celibate, the clarity that comes with keeping your legs closed is insurmountable.

It's time to stick to my coffee and cigarettes, nothing else, Charlie promises herself. She had enough of waiting and worst of all, worrying. She had horrible nightmares and terrible insomnia, but not anymore. She had become stuck in the past, the very type of people she loathed. These days, she has to drink that ZERObeer, otherwise she runs the risk of turning into a forgetful kleptomaniac with delusions of grandeur. Now, despite how inviting that is, too much fun could lead to her own death and she was far too old for dramatic attempts at life. Come on now, that act kinda gets old, doesn't it?

She had to try, at least it will only be the cigarettes that kill her and nothing else.

Did you know Charlie was a drunk kleptomaniac? Well, this one had a ton of tricks up her sleeve now, don't be fooled.

A story for another day.

One of these days she'll find herself actually finishing her sentences.

Grandfather, please stand on the shoulders of my father while he's deep-sea fishing

Lana del Rey

This is how I found myself, all I could remember was being dragged out onto an ambulance stretcher and being resuscitated. I remember being outside my body and looking at my body. It felt like I was sleepwalking except that my physical body was strapped into the hospital bed. All I wanted to do was run away, I was running over to greener pastures or so I thought.

These personal intimacies were intermingled with my very own violent tendencies.

I was purportedly lashing out at everyone and ripping the IVs and magnetic shits off my body and running away screaming. The truth was, I didn't want them to fucking save me. I felt dead then, stuck in an odd plane of my life, semi-conscious and completely unaware.

These days, I wake up in a cold sweat, escaping some horrible nightmare. These seem to get more gruesome, so much so that I am shocking myself with my own vivid, gruesome imagination. I am running, as if the very hounds of hell were fiery red on my heels.

Explain to me, why am I fucking running away all the time?

Unfortunately, it seems that I can no longer attempt to die, because it was becoming frankly, extremely unfashionable. Oddly enough,

She sat through days of blur, every face looked the same, she had an awfully anxious energy and could not do anything but discover new things. She had to be engaged because if she could not create art, then you know that she would have truly died inside.

Let her die, create her death.

Oh, divine being, why not?

Why actually not?

We never asked to be born.

The discharge summary stated that she overdosed.

She was delirious and therefore, unable to give a reliable history.

Unclear history of ingestion.

The last thing she remembered was an impulse to swallow all the tablets, to then swallow the pain, it felt like.

She vaguely remembered lying on a stretcher and pulling out IV's out of her arm.

She did not die, just vomited and hallucinated.

What a stupid fucking bitch, lol.¹ I know, this is no laughing matter but when there are no tears left, what else is there to do but laugh?

Every day felt morbidly painful, more so than the last, she had vivid nightmares of being chased, hunted and preyed upon. Sometimes, Charlie escaped in these dreams. Other times, she jumped off a cliff. Talk about a melodramatic psychotic bitch, am I right?

Everyone had opinions on what she should have done, everyone wanted her to be their best version of her and yet, she took the Uber home alone from the hospital at 3 a.m..

Everyone only knew a portion of herself that she let be known. They nodded and she nodded along too, knowing that she put this on herself.

Everyone told her she had too much to deal with.

No one actually asked her how they could help her. they sympathised but was sympathy enough? Perhaps Charlie expected too much of the mainstream world.

It was partially her fault anyway, she hid things so well. Maybe Charlie did not want to hide underneath furnaces anymore, she wanted to burn like Calcifer in her throbbing self woes.

When she was alone, there really wasn't much to laugh about anyway.

When you are alone, there is not much left but different versions of yourself persuading you of their own criterias.

Now, enough for a bit of a depressive spiral.

This is how it feels like to think in a nonlinear fashion.

To live in with silent buttons and 20 different conversations.

¹ LOL: Laugh out loud or laughing out loud; Used as a response to a funny situation or when you find something amusing. Also used in an attempt to be ironic and cool.

Where you don't sleep with the person you like but only with the person you want to.

Where instant gratification has its hold, where letting go now is more important.

When there is one person on your mind and another in your sheets.

When you value your self-worth and that vape when drinking isn't really one, is it?

When you sit on picnic mats and dish relationship advice, being completely single.

You nod and they promise potential matches.

When a nod is enough but a shake is too much.

You get all the good girls, honey?

Not this one.

As people grow older, we fall into ourselves.

We get more blunt or more subdued.

We fall into our quirks and updos.

The snacks by our desks and that tattoo on your waist.

The pink colours on our nails and swipes to fill this prayer.

The stained fingertips and bathroom selfies.

Some think and others talk.

The pointed questions and thought rehearsed answers.

The physical variety and emotional obstinance.

Cultivating an outer layer to unmatched socks

Onions don't peel to show you the layer.

You're blinded by tears when it falls apart.

Then again, we chose this layer.