

Fear of Being the Cicada

Woke up early today.

No

But I tried.

I set up an alarm.

And woke up earlier because my flatmate's horrendous alarm was blaring at 7am.

Mine was for 9am

Woke up so tired

I had to go back to sleep

Lost my morning as a result.

But it's fine.

I'll get on with my day from here.

Got to have a breakfast.

Can't do anything without food in my stomach first

I make it quickly

I eat it quickly

With no distraction.

No phone.

No computer.

Nothing.

Just food.

Just need to get this over with, then I can start working.

No

I need to meditate first.

It's not useful

But I can tell my day is worse when I don't meditate first

Can't focus

I might not focus either way after meditation

But it's almost a certainty that I will not focus if I don't meditate.

Losing more time.

But it's fine.

I'll get on with my day from here.

I'm about to head out.

To write at a café

To get some applications done

At least get one application done

Or start working on one

Need to do some writing too

The creative kind

I'm heading out

No

Need to get my laundry done.

Have to plan my last load before my holiday
Need to calculate how long it'll take, so that I can take it out in time.
Don't want to block the machine for the housemates.
Out of respect
Even if that respect has never been reciprocated to me
But mostly out of concern.
That they'd touch my laundry
I'm not picky about laundry.
I'm not germaphobic
I've got nothing against germs
Or Germans for that matter
But considering how disgusting the flat is
Considering how disgusting my flatmates are
Considering how inconsiderate my flatmates are
I just don't want to take the risk
I have once.
Found my laundry on the kitchen plan
My cleaned laundry
On the ne'er-cleaned kitchen plan
Can't happen again
...
I'll make a quick wash when I return.
But it's fine.
I'll get on with my day from here.

I'm out.
At a café
The usual one
Got a stamp card there.
10th drink is free
Main reason.
Staff is nice too.
I sit with my computer
Get on with my work.
No
Have to record my health and craft stats
I keep track
Of how I sleep
Of what I read
Of what I watch
Of what I earn too
To see if things change
If things get better
They don't
But I try.

So I go through my routine check before anything else
Otherwise I'll forget
But it's fine.
I'll get on with my day from here.

I check the next job application to go through.

It's boring

Dull

Unspecific

Low standards

I'll never get it.

Criteria

'Excellent *written* skills'

'Ability to use internet'

'Experience handling cash'

...

Is there a term above 'over-qualified'?

I suck it up

Address every criteria as if they were intelligible

I ache

I'm bored out of my mind

I'm tired

Coffee helps

Coffee doesn't help enough

I write

Painstakingly

About my ability to use the internet

Send the application

With no hope of an answer

But it's fine

I'll get on with my day from here.

I'll move on.

I switch to writing.

The real writing.

It's been a while.

I don't know where to start

I don't know where to start?

No

I don't know where to start.

What is it that I'm trying to do?

What is it that I'm trying to say?

What is it that I want to share?

Something.

But what?

I don't know.
'What am I afraid of', maybe?
'This.'
...
I stare at the blank page.
I open a non-blank page
Unfinished work
That I hope to finish
I go through everything I've done.
I like it
I have to read it all first.
But it's fine
I'll get on with my writing from here.

Writing is about me.
I can feel it.
It doesn't seem to feel me back.
It doesn't grow
It doesn't move
It's always just 'about'
But it's never actually there.
Minutes pass
Put on some music.
For isolation
For inspiration
For distraction
Done.
I'm distracted.
An hour has passed.
I need to go home
I'm hungry.
Also, if I want to go out again after lunch-
'Lunch' at 4pm
If I want to go out after lunch
I need to get moving now.
I didn't write.
I read.
But I didn't write.
But it's fine
I'll get on with my day from here.

I go home
'Going home' means a five-minutes route
Barely enough to listen to two songs.
Depending on the songs

I take the scenic route
To add an extra five minutes
To feel like I'm on a trip
To separate work from home
Considering that my martial arts practice is even further than that
Doesn't make sense
Who cares? I try
I get home
Struggle to decide what to eat
The struggle is real
I like cooking.
I also don't like cooking
Not enough patience
And I have patience
I go for a half-arsed meal
Basic, but 'healthy'
To minimise the time waste
So that I can work again after lunch
'Lunch'
30 minutes cooking
12 minutes eating
I wasted 2h45
Surprised? No.
Disappointed? Yes.
But it's fine
I'll get on with my day from here.

No time to go out again to write.
'You could write from home?'
Before I can answer, my housemate decides to take that question, and replies with a door slam.
Touché.
Other one shouts on his phone as if he were in the middle of a hurricane
I get it.
Writing from home is not for anytime soon.
Go to the store instead.
I don't need anything
But that's an excuse to get out of the house
And see people
'See people'
Sometimes I feel even lonelier when I see loads of people that I don't talk to, than when I don't see anyone.
What a life.
Here again, I hesitate.
Calculating whether it's a waste of time.

~~whether~~ < how much of a waste of time
It's a waste
But have I got a better option to waste my time on?

.
That's what I thought.
But it's fine
I'll get on with my day from here.

I come home.
Store my 8th and 9th cartons of soy milk under my bed with the others
I've got time before it's too late
Too late for what?
Don't know
I could play the guitar?
I could play the guitar
I will play the guitar
I'll just chill a bit first
That lack of social interactions has worn me out
I'll check my phone
YouTube
Shorts.
Cats
Always cats.
The closest thing to a piece of happiness that I can afford right now
That I know how to afford
I watch for a while
Can't tell how many shorts
I have landed on someone playing the Mario Kart tune on a classic guitar
Time to acknowledge my procrastination
Swipe my browser out of my screen altogether
Radical.
Checking my apps
In case I got messages.
I *do* get messages!
Sometimes.
WhatsApp.
Emails.
Olio.
Podcast.
Weather?
Good
I automatically open the browser again
YouTube.
No.
I know.

A bit more.
Always a bit more..
But it's fine
I'll get on with my day from here.

No.
It's 8:30pm
It's too late now
I knew it would be
I didn't listen to me
Shame.
Time to eat again.
I'm not hungry.
I'll get hungry before I go to bed
It's called prevention
Smart thinking.
I got my quota of cooked food this lunch
'Lunch'
I'm proud.
In a way.
Don't feel the urge of cooking again
Peanut butter sandwiches + soy milk
A classic
Safe move
Soy milk: the second best thing in my life at the moment after cat videos
Yup.
...
I'll also watch a film
'Film'
Series?
Better.
Short attention span.
No strength
Need to go to bed early
Aim for 10:30pm
But really, it'll be more like 11pm
I've got my alarm set at 8am
Need my 9 hours of sleep
So that I feel fresh tomorrow morning
So that tomorrow I can actually get on with it
Do something
Feel like I'm doing something
Moving forward
With my writing
With my job applications

With my life
With everything
Good idea.
No need to dwell on a mistake
I feel bad about myself so I watch another episode
I feel bad about myself for watching another episode
But it's fine
As long as I go to bed before 12am
The earlier the better
I'd like to read too.
I need to get on with my reading too
It's already 11:30pm
It's fine.
I'll get on with my reading now

I finish reading at 12:30am
It's late
Later than planned
I need to meditate just before going to bed
To calm myself down
To relax
To get myself tired
Not that I didn't yawn for the last two hours
Meditation
Then the last toilet trip
Prevention too.
It's 1am
It's 1am.
How..?
It's fine
I'll get on from-
Might as well not waste any more time
I won't wake up early tomorrow again
But I can 'not wake up too late'
I could
If I'm able to
I go to bed
Lights off
Sleep
No.
No.
Still no.
But it's fine
I'll get on with my day tomorrow morning.

Eyes about to close
I get up to turn off the alarm
I can't do anything if I'm tired
I might as well get a good night sleep
I know I won't
I'll feel tired tomorrow as well
But it's fine
I'll improvise again tomorrow.

Fear of life

If we take the definition of a story as something that has a beginning, middle and end. The only story that we'll never fully know is our own.

For some things in my life, we can pinpoint a beginning. A moment of change or discovery. Something that has marked us so intensely that it has changed our being, our identity, our life.

For other things, we just get used to something new, whether we see it as a smooth, or rather an insidious, transition, the common aspect is that we can't tell when it started.

We can't pinpoint when our life started, can we? We might have a date, but no memory. Nothing. Life is just something that we simply got used to. For some of us it was a smooth induction, for others an uncomfortable feeling that slowly but steadily crept on us..

Then there's also the middle ground: a smooth *and* insidious feeling, like going to the toilet with a full bladder only to wake up in a puddle.. As such, I have this uneasy feeling that we'll never know the full extend of life until we wake up from it.

Now, there's the common conception that everyone only has one life. On a biological level, it's pretty safe to say, 'yes'. End of discussion.

But it doesn't always feel like this.

Some changes have flipped me over so painfully that it felt like starting over. Not as a choice. But as a necessity. Even if I had tried to keep going as I were, everything would always feel half-baked. Incomplete. Pointless.

Until a new life begins.

What's satisfying is the idea that it is inconceivable not to live; therefore, a new life *must* begin. Like breathing. We don't have to think about it. We just do.

Life is the default setting. Something that is inseparable from us.

Until it is.. But I might be jumping too much ahead here.

Now, as much as our biological, or first, life seamlessly settles in, our other lives, if there are any, do not always follow that path.

They didn't for me.

I remember my first life ended at age 16.

Up until then. I could say it seemed fairly smooth sailing. It wasn't. But compared to what happened after, it very much was.

No responsibilities. No authority. No worries.

Too good to be true? Definitely.

The world revolved around my arse. Whether I liked it or not.

I just followed what everyone told me. Just adding stuff onto my back. Like a camel. No thinking. Just following.

Once that life ended, I felt extremely stupid.

In my defence, what child isn't?

But on hindsight, I felt relieved, and also depressed to see that most people I encountered later on, never actually left that stage.

I call these people 'stupid', but that's just because, deep inside, I'm utterly jealous of them.

Whether out of luck or out of hard work; affording stupidity is a severely underrated privilege.

The way my first life ended foreshadowed a defining character of my self: trust.

Someone failed me. Simple as that.. It's not as simple as that. But that's not the point of this text here.

Relying on others seemed then to be a risky business. So I stuck by myself. For my own safety.

Learning from my mistake. I wouldn't leave my own being completely at someone else's mercy.

The closest to defying that I'd ever done. Saying 'no'. 'The lion'.. Or a rerun of the anal phase.

That's called adolescence. Nothing special. Mine lasted until I was almost 22.

Again, I felt stupid, but I also met much older people acting in even more a juvenile way than this.

The funny thing is that, regardless of my age, I have always assumed that I was, to a certain extent — if only, the one of my knowledge and consciousness — at peak maturity in the present: 'We are as best as we can be in the here and now'.

Obviously, that's true, since we only know the past, and the future often feel like an Austrian cat. Though, in theory, we must all know that it isn't. That's the reason we can't foresee our own mistakes.

That's the reason I didn't see mine coming. And that's the reason it was the more painful.

My lack of trust in others extended only to the people I didn't expect I could trust, not the ones I expected I could, obviously!

Those ones were above suspicion.

They shouldn't have been.

Now. Failing once is painful. Failing twice, it's more painful. Failing twice over the same mistake is excruciating. After the first one, I learned, I adapted, I started my new life; a life free of that very threat. So I let your guard down, and that's where it strikes.

The lion is dead. Maybe that's where we realise it was never really alive in the first place.

Enter depression.

'The safe spot isn't safe anymore, let's go somewhere else'. Then 'somewhere else' isn't safe either.

It's the dog in the electrified cage experiment. Nowhere else to go. The dread disappears. Only pain is left. And you just have to get used to it.

Once done, the next life begins.

This one, far away.

Like playing Scrabble. If you can't make any new move, you just change the hand you were dealt.

I removed all the bad stuff, and kept the little that worked for me.

I moved to the 'child' stage. Everything's new. Everything is to be learned again. So everything is hopeful again.

I learned again. The things I thought I had already learned, but actually hadn't.

Things felt easier, and much harder at the same time.

Making friends like I was in the schoolyard. Except that they are all adults instead of five-year-olds. Probably the reason I ended up liking the ones acting like five-year-olds.

But this time is different. This time I know what I am doing. I am in control. I don't rely on a naively presupposed goodwill in others. I'm no longer passive.

And yet..

The point of rupture.

If a double failure is impressive, how's a triple one?

Trust. Again. Always.

I never learn.

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So where does the story end?

It's coming onto four years that my last life has ended. And nothing new has arrived yet.

No smooth change. At least, nothing that I got used to with time.

No abrupt event that changed everything. At least, none since the one that ended my previous life.

Where am I? I don't know.

Where am I going? I don't know either.

The past isn't a good reference to follow.

The present feels like a breath that's held for a moment. But that moment lasts forever.

And the future? The future seems irrelevant. Which doesn't help to build it.

What comes after the child?

What happens when trusting others doesn't work. Not trusting others doesn't work. Trying again to trust doesn't work. And no matter how much I learn, I never seem to follow that design.

What happens when fear disappears?
when pain disappears?
when expectations disappear?
when curiosity feels obsolete?

What happens then?

I would say that I'm afraid to find out. But I stopped being afraid a long time ago.

Until something happens.

And fear comes back.

So starts my next life.

Hopefully, it will.

Out of fear

C'était une après-midi de mi-décembre. Je venais de finir le travail en grand magasin. Je devais passer vers la boutique Apple parce que mon ordinateur avait verrouillé l'accès à mon profile pour une raison que j'ignorais. Il était 16h, il faisait déjà nuit noire, ce n'était pas pour les illuminations de Noël de la rue commerçante qui parodiait un soleil éternel jour et nuit depuis le début du mois. Inutile de dire que la rue était bondée. La rue la plus touristique du quartier le plus touristique d'une des villes les plus touristiques du monde : la période de Noël n'est pas pour les agoraphobes ici. Ça ne faisait que quelques mois que j'avais commencé à travailler dans ce quartier, mais j'étais déjà devenu impassible à la foule. Les gens sont bruyants, les gens sont bêtes ; alors, en foule, c'est encore pire, donc aucun espoir pour moi d'inspirer du bon sens chez cette mer de zombies. A ce moment-là, il faut faire comme avec les animaux : ne pas avoir peur de s'imposer, quitte à être un peu brusque — bien que dans ce contexte-ci j'ai quand même plus de respect pour les animaux que pour les gens : les deux sont très cons, mais, au contraire des humains, les animaux ne prétendent pas être le contraire.

Je me mis en route à travers cette huée humaine. Je jouai des coudes, fis des pas chassés, ronds de jambes, pirouettes. Je danse avec la masse à son insu. Si la foule avait pu être éliminée par ordinateur, on aurait dit une publicité hip pour un marque de vêtements avec un slogan générique et non-descriptif des produits. Je me frottai aux gens, et disparus avant qu'ils eurent le temps de se retourner vers la source de leur secousse. Le petit kilomètre qui séparait les deux magasins m'offrit une sensation d'aventure, bien que brève, bienvenue dans ma routine ; comme le protagoniste d'un film d'espion, invisible aux yeux du monde, se faufilant avec aisance à travers les citoyens innocents d'un pays étranger abritant un criminel international.

Arrivé chez Apple, je fus surpris de la rapidité avec laquelle je fut aidé. Il y avait bien une foule là également, mais ils avaient l'air d'avoir appelé du personnel en renfort. Bien calculé. Aussitôt arrivé, aussitôt reparti : Ils n'avaient aucune idée de la raison pour laquelle mon ordinateur me refusait l'accès — par après, je trouverai la cause du problème comme étant simple le changement de langue, mon mot de passe ne marchant qu'avec la version française apparemment, je devrais confirmer mon mot de passe à nouveau après avoir changé la langue du logiciel en anglais.

Je ressortis, prêt à rejoindre le troupeau touristique. Le retour serait plus court, je pris la première entrée de métro au carrefour que j'avais traversé quelques minutes auparavant, à moins de 100 mètres du magasin — une station en plus valait la peine d'éviter une autre session de gymnastique urbaine. La meute semblait éparse vers l'entrée du métro : mauvais signe. J'arrivai à la bouche béante menant sous la rue, seulement pour la voir fermée : barrière, chaîne, avec le moniteur digital au-dessus indiquant que l'entrée était fermée.. en cas de confusion. Ce n'est pas la fin du monde, ils ont l'habitude de faire ça en heure de pointe pour éviter les congestions — ironique ; qu'importe, je prendrais l'entrée de l'autre côté de la route. Je me dirigeai vers celle-ci, traversant la route — l'espace le moins étouffant de toute la rue — pour faire face à la même déception : entrée fermée. Ceci devenait bizarre. J'aurai compris plus vite si ce n'avait été pour la populace qui couvraient tous son qui sortait de l'ordinaire. De cette façon, j'aurai remarqué plus vite

les sirènes approchantes, ainsi que le policier se tenant de l'autre côté de l'entrée, invitant les gens à se diriger dans la rue que je venais de quitter.

Les sirènes devinrent envahissantes derrière moi alors que je considérais la route de retour la plus efficace à prendre. Le reste se passa en un instant. Le fourgon à l'origine des sirènes assourdissantes s'arrêta à l'entrée de l'autre côté de la rue d'où je me tenais. Un autre arriva le moment d'après suivi par deux autres voitures de police. Le policier repéré près de l'entrée du métro décida d'augmenter l'urgence de ses indications à la foule en un instant : Il hurla d'un ton sec et autoritaire : "Tout le monde se dirige par là!", indiquant la rue descendante vers le magasin Apple. J'allais tourner en ronds, mais l'urgence dans sa voix me fit comprendre que ça en valait la peine. Les fourgons ouvrirent leur portes arrières, et un flot d'agents en tenues tactiques avec les fusils d'assault firent éruption dans la rue, criant des ordres incompréhensibles.

Jusqu'à ce moment-là, la foule était encore relativement contenue et obligeante, bien que moins frivole que l'instant précédent. J'acceptai ma place dans le troupeau, et le suivit comme le bétail qu'on amena à l'abattoir. Il faut noter que la rue prise était dans une pente légèrement descendante, ce qui donnait une vue — pour les gens de ma taille du moins — sur les événements se passant quelques dizaines de mètres devant nous. Le spectacle que je découvris à cet instant infusa une horrible appréhension face à un danger imminent et inévitable. À une cinquantaine de mètres devant moi, je vis un mouvement de foule allant dans la direction directement opposée à la nôtre. Les deux vagues se firent front, et comme des dominos chaque personne de ma meute fit demi-tour, mais pas sans une sensation de terreur claustrophobique grandissant ; en effet, nous évacuions le site d'un danger potentiel pour aller vers un site indiqué comme sauf, et voici qu'une troupe venait de faire le chemin inverse à partir de la même indication présumée. Nous étions cernés. C'est à ce moment que la panique jaillit : les cris ; les bousculades pouvant tourner à tout moment en piétinements, les gens courant dans tous les sens comme des poules à qui on avait coupé la tête. C'est également à cet instant, que je me surpris moi-même. Dans un moment d'hystérie de masse, la dernière chose à laquelle je m'attendais de ressentir était de la jouissance. Alors que le chaos s'imposait autour de moi, je ne savais éprouver que de l'excitation.

Les humains sont des animaux après tout. Il ne suffit que d'un simple signe que notre civilisation soit en danger pour que nous retournions à nos instincts primaires. Alors que je trouvais mon chemin hors de cette masse, les gens autour de moi se ruaient pour trouver refuge dans les commerces le plus proches ; leur faisant face, les gens déjà à l'intérieur de ceux-ci tenaient les portes fermées de l'intérieur pour les empêcher d'entrer ; une situation absurde pour l'observateur extérieur, et hilare si ce n'était pour son contexte inquiétant. L'état d'urgence déclaré, tout individu devient suspect, et plus personne n'est sauf.

Alors que je perdais le troupeau dans les rues adjacentes, je trouvai un endroit avec une connection Wifi pour en savoir plus sur la situation que je venais de vivre : évacuation de la station de métro, coup de feu, blessés, alarme incendie, souterrains en feu... L'élément de panique derrière moi, je pris une station de métro plus au nord, pour être sûr d'éviter toute congestion résultante de cet incident. Le lendemain, je regarde les nouvelles, l'événement est à peine mentionné : une bagarre entre deux personnes à l'intérieur de la station de métro dégénère en panique générale au centre-ville. Je suis sûr qu'il devrait y

avoir une morale ici, mais je suis également certain que, quelle qu'elle soit, personne ne la prendra en compte ; telle est la nature humaine. Quel conte de Noël à deux balles.

Fearless

Playlist —

Black.

Music bursts in: Break the Rules by Charli XCX.

When the chorus comes in, the music fades out to the background, dim/party lights fade in onto ELLIE (female, late 20's) sitting on a couch; a full glass of water on the coffee table in front of her.

Ellie smiles awkwardly to someone in front of her, then looks away. She looks back, the person is still there; she tightens up:

Ellie. Yea, yea. I'm good, thanks.

No. I know. I'm all right with tap water. *(She picks up the glass, but doesn't drink from it)* It's just. I don't- I don't do alcohol.

I mean, I do. I *do* do alcohol.

(She blushes) I don't 'doo-doo', I meant-

Beat.

Water's good for now, thanks.

I'm Ellie, by the-

Ellie smiles as she watches the person walk away.

The person out of sight, she falls back onto the couch, and lets out a sigh.

Black.

Music changes to: Red Balloon by Charli XCX. Music fades out to the background when the drums come in, as the lights fade in to Ellie, same as before, but with a glass of juice instead of water.

Ellie looks around.

She hears someone calling her to her right; she turns to them:

Ellie. Yea, no. It's just juice.

(Repeating herself louder) Just juice. Yes.

I know it looks like a cocktail. It's not.

Yes, I guess it could be used in a cocktail.

No, I brought it. It's mine. I mean, it's not *mine*, but- I was the one who brought it, that's what I meant. I waited at first for other people to drink some, but since no one seemed to-

It's carrot juice.

Carrot.

CARROT.

No, it doesn't taste bad.

Do you want to try-?

No, it's fine. You don't have to.

Yea, alcohol would make it taste better, I suppose so.

No, there's none in mine. It's just carrot juice.

Just- Yes.

I don't know. I'm just not a huge fan of-

She laughs nervously.

She stops laughing.

No, I'd rather-

I'm a friend of Sarah's. I mean, we go to the same school- Yea, uni, that's what I meant, but it's an art school, so that's why I-

No. I think she just invited the whole class-

You'd have to ask her.

What? No, like I said, I'm not a huge fan-

No, it's not a religious thing.

Yes, I can drink it, I just decide not-

She sighs, looks around.

Pause.

She turns back to the person.

Sure. I don't mind a tiny bit, I guess.

(She gets up) Let me get it-

I can take one for you too.

No, I'd rather-

It's because I want to make sure-

No, I didn't mean-

Ok.

Yea, sure. It's fine. Thanks.

I'll-

I'll stay here.

Ellie slumps back down on the couch.

Black.

Music changes to: London Queen by Charli XCX.

Music fades out to the background when the guitar comes in, as the lights fade in to Ellie, a plastic cup in hand, and her cheeks red.

Ellie. Yea, it's nice.

No, I have tried it.

(She takes a sip).

Mmh. Yea.

Don't know. Feels like- Feels like- *It feels like (She laughs at herself).* Woo! It just feels like it's.. fake.

Not the alcohol. No, no. This is definitely not fake. Haha.

No, but the idea to have to drink to- Just *be*. Just be at a party. It sounds fake. Why can't we just *be* at the party regardless?

I have been to parties before. *(She drinks)* Yea.

They just are not things that I do for fun.

What's that?

Oh. Well..

Reading's nice.

Haha. I know. Put like that, it's not. Fun. Like, not 'fun' in the sense of.. 'fun'.

Silence.

She drinks self-consciously.

She leans over.

What did he say?

No, tell me.

Oh. *(Beat)*. Haha.

Wow. Your friend's quite.. Upfront.

I don't need to have had some kind of trauma to not like. Partying. Life's not always 'traumatising', is it?

She laughs. She stops laughing.

No, I didn't mean- I get some people are- And that's a shame, but-

Sure.

Sorry about your grand-nan.

Yes, that sounds awful.. Yea, awful.

I do empathise.

Not because I'm a girl. It's not- I mean, yes, there's a bit of solidarity in there, but it could have been anyone. If it'd happened to anyone, I'd have said the same- the same thing. It's not-

If it had happened to a pedophile? I- I don't know. I don't know that many pedophiles. *(She laughs to herself; stops laughing)* No, I don't know any ped- That's not-

I think bad things like that are- they're bad and- they shouldn't be- bad.. 'Generally speaking'.

She drinks. Her glass is empty. She's self-conscious.

Sure, I'd love to talk to your nan- grand-nan.

She laughs. She stops laughing.

Oh. Now? Really?

She must be asleep, mustn't she?

She laughs. She stops laughing. She drinks from her glass, remembers it's empty, pretends it's not, but too hard.

So, how do you know Sar-?

Sure, have a smoke.

Oh, no, thanks. I'm not-

I'm not-

I don't-

I don't smoke. No.

But thanks.

(She stands up) Tell you what. You go have a smoke and I'll get myself another drink.

Do you want-? *(Her eyes follow them as they leave the room)*

She stands in the middle of the room. Looks at her glass. Looks around. She sighs, and leaves for the kitchen.

Black.

Music changes to: Body of My Own by Charli XCX.

Music fades out to the background when the lyrics come in, as the lights fade in to Ellie sitting on the couch, a plastic cup in her hand. A drunk MAN (late 20's) sits on the other side of the couch, looking in front of him.

Ellie glances at him repeatedly, until:

Ellie. You come here often?

She bursts out laughing.

Sorry, that was terrible!

She looks for a reaction from the man. He keeps looking in front of him.

She nods at her drink:

It's my third one.

Jäger.

(Whispers) It's short for 'Jägerbomb'.

She winks at him. No reaction.

I don't even like it. It tastes terrible. Every time I drink it, I say to myself: *(with a terrible Geordie accent impression)* 'Urgh! Never drinking that shite again!' And then, next thing you know: *(She raises her glass).*

My family's from Newcastle.

That's why the accent.

Not that I mean all Northerners are drunkards. It's just my family-

My family is not just drunkards. It's not-

You get my point.

You're pretty judgy for someone who doesn't talk.

Beat. She takes another sip.

I mean, it's actually the first one I've ever had, but I- *(She laughs)*. Third! Third one! Woo, that escalated quickly.

You do Jäger- Do you do- 'How do you do?'

She laughs by herself. Looks at him. Nothing.

(Deep 'male' voice) I'm doing well, Ellie. Thanks. What's your name?

(She makes an unflattering impression of herself) Well, you just said my name. I'm- Oh, never mind, you're gone.

(She shrugs) Too bad.

She sighs.

We make a great team, but also I need another drink, so I'm gonna dash.

(She stands up) You. You just stay here. Don't move. *(Beat)* Perfect. You were born for that part.

She skips away.

Black.

Music changes to: Die Tonight by Charli XCX.

Music fades out to the background when the bass drum comes in, as the lights fade in to Ellie sitting on the couch, a plastic cup in her hand. A half-empty bottle of gin on the table in front of her. The man is still on the couch, but he now holds a bucket between his laps, underneath his head, which drops from time to time.

Ellie. You kinda of let me down here, Jackie. You don't mind me calling you 'Jackie'? Surely you don't. You haven't said a word this whole time. I'm like making the conversation all by myself here. You don't do that to people. It's rude.

I do it too, yes. But- And it's not my trial here. If it's anyone's, it should be yours, *Jackie*, don't you think? Don't you?

I had to defend you in front of people. I'm kinda ashamed, to tell the truth. You don't seem to understand the etiquette, '*le savoir vivre*', heard of that one?

She chugs her drink. Refills it with gin. Sips from it.

Bet you haven't.

Rude.

Beat.

You know? It's not even like I asked you to stay here with me. I'm fine on my own.

Go ahead, leave! Leave me! Like everyone did. Like everyone always does.

I'm not being dramatic.

I'm just being. Re-a-lis-t..-tic.

That's why I don't go out.

I'm not scared.

It's not about 'being scared'. Why would you say that?

Because I'm not *scared* of going out. I'm not *scared* of drinking. *(She raises her glass)* Look.

She chugs her glass. Refills it automatically. Looks at it as she is about to sip from it again, but decides against it.

Ellie looks away.

I didn't want to come here anyway. This is not my.. 'thing'.

I don't know what my 'thing' is. But it's definitely not *this*.

But, hey, I thought to myself, 'let's try something new.' 'Let's try something that I don't usually do.' Because the things I usually do don't get me anywhere in life.

I mean, they did get me to uni. But uni's not life, is it?

(To herself) I wish it was.

She sobs to herself.

Black.

Music changes to: Vroom Vroom by Charli XCX — mid-song.

When the chorus comes in, music stays at full volume as the lights fade in to Ellie dancing on the coffee table. The man is still on the couch, but his head hangs over the armrest, the bucket underneath it and vomit underneath that one.

Ellie is in trance. Eyes closed, she feels the music.

She dances like no one is watching.

She's never felt freer in her life.

For the duration of a song, she is fearless.

She dances through the whole song.

At the gasp marking the end of the song, the man falls onto the floor.

Ellie doesn't react to it. Her eyes closed, she sighs of satisfaction.

Black.

Music changes to: Boom Clap by Charli XCX.

Music fades out to the background when the verse comes in, as the lights fade in to Ellie sitting on the couch, a glass of water on the coffee table in front of her, and another glass of water on the other side of the table. She is talking to someone.

Ellie giggles.

Ellie. I don't know.

Maybe it's just the alcohol. I'm not used to it. My head's a bit fuzzy at the moment.

She smiles and drinks some water.

I'm glad you caught me, by the way. I could have hurt myself pretty badly. Concussion doesn't really sound good to me right now.

Right now, or ever, concussion just doesn't sound good. I think everyone would agree on that.

Wouldn't you?

She smiles at the person's reaction.

It's just parties. And being around other people.

And alcohol. And dancing on coffee tables.

And being around other people.

I've ticked a lot of boxes tonight.

Thank you! It's nice to feel appreciated.

I *am* proud of myself.

In some way, I suppose.

This is probably the last thing I'd thought I'd be proud of, but here we are!

She laughs.

She smiles.

Sorry?

Oh. Um. Sure.

As long as it's not on a coffee table, we should be fine.

She laughs.

She finishes her glass of water and stands up.

Black.

Music changes to: Guess by Charli XCX (feat. Billie Eilish).

When the lyrics come in, music stays full volume as the lights fade in to Ellie dancing. The coffee table and couch have been pushed to leave space for people dancing. A glass of water on the coffee table amongst plastic cups and bottles of spirits. She looks around and occasionally smiles at others.

After a moment, the music suddenly stops mid-song.

Ellie. Woo!

It was fun while it lasted!

She laughs heartily.

She goes to have a sip of water. Looks around, smiling.

Her smiles fades a bit.

Have you seen-? (*She laughs*) I feel bad. I can't even remember his name.

This guy. With the blue t-shirt.

Yea, I know it's dark. Don't worry.

He was there.

Music starts again, full volume.

(*Shouting*) Never mind!

She resumes her dancing.

Something on her left catches her eyes.

She smiles.

She gives a little wave in that direction, while still dancing.

She waves more enthusiastically.

She gets another sip of water.

She makes a sign of approaching with her hand.

She slows down her dancing.

Her smiles disappears slowly.

She gets to a stand still.

She looks at her water. Then around her. She smiles politely around.

She slowly leaves to her right.

Black.

Music changes to: I Love it by Icona Pop (feat. Charli XCX) — mid-song.

When a 'I don't care' comes in, music stays full volume as the lights goes on Ellie, sitting on the couch,

She plays with her empty glass.

The song ends. Need Ur Luv by Charli XCX starts.

When the lyrics start, Ellie looks up.

She sighs.

She looks to her left. Stares at it for a while.

Looks back to her glass.

She's overwhelmed.

She stands up brusquely. Gets self-conscious. Slowly sits down.

A moment.

She stands up, goes to leave her glass on the coffee table.

She goes to leave.

She stops to look back to left before she exits right.

She turns around and exits.

A moment.

Ellie re-enters with a firm step. She goes straight for the coffee table, and grabs the bottle of gin.

Black.

Music changes to: Spring Breakers by Charli XCX.

The music is much louder than before. As the bass drum comes in, lights flash on Ellie dancing in her underwear, and drinking straight from the bottle of gin.

She dances aggressively.

She swings her bottle around, and regularly drinks from it.

She goes up and down the room dancing.

She drinks another sip. Feels something coming up.

She runs offstage to vomit.

She comes back vomit dripping down her mouth and all over her body.

She shouts a 'Woo!' (inaudible), and goes back to drinking and dancing.

She jumps on the couch. Dances on it.

She climbs on the backrest of the couch.

She loses balance and jumps backward to land on her back behind the couch.

Music stops and stage goes black as her body hits the floor.

La peur qui rode

Les gens autour de moi me dévisagent comme si j'étais un alien. Impressionnant comme l'ironie ne les touchent pas. S'il y a une personne dans cette foule qui a encore toute sa tête c'est bien moi. Est-ce qu'ils se rendent compte qu'ils sont pour moi comme des animaux en cage ? Sauf qu'ils ne voient pas leur barreaux, et pensent donc qu'ils sont libres alors qu'ils ne sont pas plus loin de la réalité.

Il ne suffit que de voir leur réaction à n'importe quel imprévu. Est-ce qu'ils réagissent dans la défensive, prêts à se battre pour leur survie ? Évidemment que non ! Ils s'écrasent tous comme des pantins à qui on leur coupe soudainement les fils. Ils révèlent leur vraie nature de marionette, attachés constamment à ces fils qu'ils pensent avoir besoin pour continuer à vivre dans ce monde qu'ils ont eux-mêmes rendu hostile. Ils trainent leur fils partout. Prends leur jobs ; que sont-ils s'ils n'avaient pas de jobs pour se définir ? "Je suis ceci." "Je suis cela." Job. Job. Job. C'est comme ça qu'ils se définissent. Une activité, qu'ils insistent eux-mêmes n'être que la plus petite partie de leur existence, et qui pourtant est leur première ligne de défense contre des inconnus. "Tu sais qui je suis ?" "Pour moi, je ne suis juste qu'un.." Je n'ai pas besoin de job pour me définir moi, principalement parce que je n'en ai pas.

Je passe un océan de vitrines: magasins, bureaux, banques, pharmacies, kiosques, restaurants, fast foods, 'pop-up stores'. Tous en uniformes ; volontaires ou non ; conscients ou non ; ils les sont tous. Les uniformes leur donnent un sense de privilège, une excuse pour traiter leurs confrères d'une façon ou d'une autre. Ils utilisent aussi les uniformes de ceux-ci pour déterminer comment les traiter. Ils peuvent se dire "ouverts", "inclusifs", "non-biaisés", ça ne change rien ; personne n'est immunisé contre les préjugés. C'est une réaction humaine. Ils me voient. Ils ne se disent pas "Oh, cher camarade, viens chez moi, que je t'offre un refuge pour te loger, pour te nourrir". Non. Ils me voient, ils voient la peste. J'ai la peste pour eux. Je *suis* la peste. Je ne suis humain que dans les grandes lignes. Assez pour ne pas me brûler au bûcher sur la place publique. À une autre époque, ç'aurait été mon destin ; pas de procès, pas de question, pas de seconde chance: "Tu as été pesé dans la balance, et tu as été trouvé léger." Le Seigneur t'offre la miséricorde, tes paires te donnent l'envie de te tourner vers Le Seigneur.

Je viens de dépasser une jeune mère et son enfant dans une poussette ; l'enfant devait bien avoir six ou sept ans, bien trop grand pour son vaisseau de croisière urbaine, et pas qu'à cause de son âge ; la glace dégoulinante dans ses mains semble faire partie de son régime alimentaire quotidien. Une image si repoussante, et pourtant, bien trop commune ; pire encore, bien trop acceptée. Je les avais suivi un moment, et pendant ce temps, ignorant quant à cette insulte à l'humanité. J'ai remarqué les regards vifs de la mère sur ma personne, sur mon image. Il lui a suffi de quelques coups d'oeil pour se décider sur ma nature, et sur la valence de celle-ci comme étant une menace à sa quiétude de privilégiée. Elle s'arrête, mine de rien, semblant réarranger la poussette pour le confort du spectacle consternant de notre postérité, et pour me laisser passer devant eux. Comme s'il était écrit sur mon front que j'allait m'attaquer à cette monstruosité. Tu crois vraiment que je peux faire face à ça ? Elle me jète un regard de stupeur. Ton diabète de type 2 sur patte m'écraserait avant même que je puisse lui foutre un poing. Et pourquoi je ferait ça ?

Pourquoi je m'incriminerais, alors qu'une assiette de bacon pourrait faire le travail bien mieux que moi dans quelques années de cela. Et c'est moi dont tu as peur ?

Les gens s'écartent en me voyant. C'est peut-être le seul avantage de ma condition. La peur qui rode. L'odeur de putréfaction. Pas de la mienne, c'est la putréfaction de leur âme. L'âme qu'ils ont vendu au prix de leur ignorance. Au prix de leur confort. Confort qui les maintient bien en place, comme du papier bulles, au cas où ils se casseraient. Parce qu'ils sont tous fragiles. Le monde a échangé ses os brisés, sa sueur, son sang, pour la délicatesse de leur êtres. L'humanité ne semble pas être très forte en négociations. Regarde pour toi-même. Marche dans la rue. Les gens que tu vois, toi-même également, si tu as une once de conscience, ont tous une raison. Une raison pour être là, en ce moment. Tu ne vois plus personne dans la rue, juste pour être dans la rue. Juste pour contempler la création humaine. Non. Tout le monde a un but. Une direction. Un trajet. Départ. Arrivée. Rien entre. Pas d'alternative. Et si tu croises leur chemin, si un imprévu s'amène, tu peux les voir déboussolés, comme s'ils venaient de sortir d'une hypnose. Erreur de connection. Un pauvre témoin de l'intelligence humaine. Ils perdent leurs moyens. Ce n'était pas sur dans le manuel. "Qu'est-ce que je fais maintenant ?" Réagit. Vit. Vit, peut-être pour la première fois depuis que tu as mis les yeux sur ton premier écran. Bou ! Le couple devant moi a reculé. Si, si. Je vous ai vus. Vous vous sentez cons là, non ? "Pourquoi avons-nous eu peur ?" Qu'ai-je fait pour vous inspirer cette sensation ? Rien. Rien que d'exister. Marrant qu'ils se sont lâché la main sur le fait. C'est inspirant pour votre avenir, vous pensez pas ? Ensemble jusqu'à ce que la mort nous sépare. La mort, ou le premier venu. Ça marche aussi.

Je m'arrête ici. Banque. Avec un quelconque nom qui n'a aucune signification pour moi. Le garde me dévisage. Quelle surprise ? Tu crois que tu viens de découvrir un nouveau spécimen ? Désolé de te décevoir, mais t'es pas le premier à avoir posé le regard sur cette vision d'horreur. Je vois qu'il se retient de me réprimander. T'as envie, n'est-ce pas ? Mais tu peux pas. A cause de tes fils de marionnette. Petit pantin avec son petit poste. Tu as surtout un manuel sur comment gérer ce genre de situations sans ternir l'image de la banque comme étant ouverte à tous. Il sourit le con. Beh vas-y. Montre-moi ta procédure d'éviction. Non ? Il veut se la jouer victime. Tu peux pas frapper avant que je donne le premier coup, n'est-ce pas ? Il faut une raison pour que tu puisses assouvir tes instincts. Dommage, je vais pas te la donner cette fois-ci. Parce que je suis pas con, moi. Je sais qu'il y a aussi dans ton manuel un point où tu es obligé de considérer toute personne comme un client potentiel. On sait tous les deux que je n'en suis pas un. Même si j'avais les moyens, je n'irai pas dans ta tirelire à oppression. Mais j'ai le potentiel. Et pour ça, je suis immunisé. Contre ton humanité. Ironique. Ton job te protège et ton job te retient. J'espère que t'es conscient de cette ironie, parce que moi je le suis. Je vais continuer mon chemin. J'ai perdu assez de temps avec toi. Je sais déjà qu'il va cracher au sol par signe de protestation. Sa seule arme contre mon pouvoir- Et voilà qui est fait. Pathétique.

Ils souffrent. Tous. Ils souffrent en silence. Qu'ils le savent ou non. J'ai pitié d'eux. Je ne devrais pas. Ils ne le méritent pas. Mais j'ai pitié. S'ils sont ainsi, ce n'est pas par choix. Personne avec toutes ses capacités mentales ne ferait ce genre de choix. Lobotomisation digitale. Sociale. Isolation sélective. Pourquoi se faire tant de mal ? "La seule chose de laquelle on peut être sûr c'est que les gens veulent tous le bonheur, et qu'ils veulent tous éviter la souffrance." Là où le bas blesse, c'est quand on se rend compte que le bonheur des

uns fait la souffrance des autres. Et commence alors la chasse à l'homme. Les uns contre les autres. "Chacun pour soi, et tout le monde contre les autres." Quand il suffit de se rendre compte qu'ensemble ils pourraient survivre plus facilement, mais le prix de l'incertitude est trop grande. Surtout à l'heure actuelle. Ils pensent que leurs "marchés" sont à risques ? Ces marchés n'ont rien à envier à la confiance envers leur prochain. Je le sais très bien. Étant leur prochain moi-même. Je leur ouvre les bras. Oui ! Je vous ouvre les bras. Et que reçois-je en retour ? Du dégoût. De la peur. De la violence. Votre salut est à portée de votre main, mais vous êtes trop occupé à vous toucher vous-mêmes pour le saisir. N'est-ce pas ? Confusion tout autour de moi. Pourquoi tant de souffrance ? Tant de souffrance qui peut être si facilement soignée ?

C'est attristant de voir que cette société qui a été construite dans le seul but de rendre la vie en groupe plus plaisante, plus saine et plus sûre ne semble que générer que le contraire. Les gens acceptent tous de jouer à ce jeu duquel ils ne comprennent pas les règles, mais insistent de maintenir cette image d'eux qu'ils sont conscients et en contrôle de la situation. Ils ont accepté les termes et conditions sans les lire, et maintenant que leur joujou est cassé, ils font semblant que c'est exactement comme ça qu'il le voulaient. Ils ont peur d'admettre leur erreur, car celle-ci est une preuve d'humanité, et toute personne se sent au-dessus du reste de l'humanité, n'est-ce pas ? L'admission de leur peur est inadmissible. Et ce n'est qu'en rencontrant une anomalie comme moi, qu'ils doivent faire face aux conséquences de leur idiotie. De rien, au passage. Je suis le rappel de votre humanité, de votre mortalité, de votre fragilité.. Je peux arriver à tout le monde. Je suis omnipotent ! Je suis omniprésent ! Quelle réalisation décevante, n'est-ce pas ? C'est une immondice inhumaine qui rend les gens humains. Pourtant ce devrait être évident. La paix ne peut exister qu'à travers un ennemi commun. Ce n'est pas le partage de traits positifs qui nous rassemble, c'est notre peur commune. Nos ressemblances ne sont que temporaires ; elles ne tiennent que le temps de trouver un point de divergence ; elles sont fragiles, fluides, éphémères. La peur, la haine, le dégoût ; ceux-ci sont certains, ce sont des valeurs sûres : des valeurs envers lesquelles nous trouvons nos meilleurs alliés.

Ils ont besoin de moi. Vous avez tous besoin de moi. Que vous le sachiez ou non, c'est la vérité. Une vérité qui vous effraie tous. Parce que le jour où je serais parti, le jour où les créatures de mon espèce seront éradiquées totalement, que ferez-vous ? Vous trouverez-vous enfin au paradis ? Avec plus aucun rappel de votre côté sombre pour vous faire garder les pieds sur terre ? Vous espérez, n'est-ce pas ? N'est-ce pas ce que l'humanité cherche ? La paix dans le monde ? Le bonheur pour tous ? Bien sûr ! Mais pourquoi ne l'avez-vous pas encore atteint si vous êtes tous d'accord sur cet objectif ? Parce que cette réalité n'existe pas. Parce qu'un monde sans horreur ne fonctionnerait pas. Il faut des perdants dans ce monde, sinon on ne saurait pas ce que 'gagner' veut dire. Il faut de la souffrance pour apprécier le plaisir. Il faut de la peur pour se sentir en sécurité. Me voilà. Je me présente à vous dans toute mon infamie. Pour votre bien.