

The Pathology of Madness

FOREWORD

For the Truth & For my beautiful daughters & for myself;

In the echo of silence, where the absence of presence that considers me reverberates through the corridors of my life, I find myself standing at the crossroads of memory and the unwritten future & the rewriting of my past by those wanting to hide in their shadows. To my mother and father, who, due to death, could not be here to witness the tapestry of experiences woven by their absence – these words emerge as an attempt to carve my own history like the photo albums I never had and a fuck you to those who bore witness with self-interest & took advantage of my isolation & have stolen the truth who cannot face themselves.

To my daughters, Mya and Lilah, who have been the beacons of light guiding me through the labyrinth of existence, I dedicate these words. In the face of a truth laid bare, I want you both to know that who you are is a culmination of your choices, not the judgments cast upon you. Mya, you have been a light that never failed to guide me, and Lilah, your presence has illuminated the darkest corners of my heart.

Without the anchor of familial lineage, I am exposed to the capricious winds of interpretation. Others, with their self-interested agendas, attempt to sculpt a narrative that fits the contours of their desires, often erasing me of my existence. In this space, overshadowed by the narratives of others, it is my duty to myself to unveil the truth as it is – unbridled and unapologetically raw.

To you, my parents, whose stories were never fully shared, I dedicate these words as a beacon of remembrance and a testament to the life that unfolded in your absence. In the shadows of our fractured past, I seek to unravel the threads & confront your ghosts and monsters that dwell within our shared history, acknowledging that we can falter as humans and still find love & learn strength.

This chronicle is not just mine; it is a proclamation that it is acceptable to be molded by the hands of monsters and haunted by the ghosts of what-could-have-been. It is a declaration that our vulnerabilities and weaknesses are not signs of defeat but reservoirs of untapped strength waiting to be discovered.

Mya and Lilah, when you encounter the disheartening words that others may say, stand strong in the truth of who you are, and let your unwavering light be the testament to your authenticity.

And to my beloved scapegoats, the children, and those who are unable to speak of the burdens people try to sweep under the rug of them, and the truth, to avoid facing themselves. There is a strength in you yet unseen or appreciated by those who see us as losers. The title of a depreciated person of no value can offer a strength not yet appreciated by this world. Fuck them all.

The Pathology of Madness

MECHANICAL ABYSS

It was in the gentleness of shadows, where I discovered a refuge—a haven for those, much like me, who were thrust into the dance of chaos from the moment we take a breath. Birth is our unchosen voyage into an unpredictable sea, that leaves us gasping for air, all because we are unable to pick the body we are created in, it is our very first lesson in our lack of control, and so we will learn to take pleasure in drowning. Chaos becomes our beautiful explosion within the mind, breaking us apart. We do cling desperately to our breath, unsure if exhaling means surrendering to imminent danger, so in defense we become blind little fish, & the fear lingers concealing whether the waters are tender or treacherous as we swim. When you finally submit to drowning, releasing the tight hold and permitting the water's gentle invasion into our lungs, a strange tranquility settles, first your head hurts, your tongue stiffens holding breath until you finally let go to the peace of death.

For me, the liberation of drowning manifested in the familiar waters of my family home, and it existed a numbness descending as I transformed not into a fish who could breathe under water, but a scapegoat lost in its depths. Distance & Apathy became my sanctuary, providing a perch on the floor of our Aquarium to quietly observe, a silent spectator of life's fish ballet above—detached & strange but cognizant.

In the diagnosis of psychopath, they found a reflection of my journey—a numbing descent into the mechanical realm, courtesy of dysthymia. A robot, they declared, shaped by a history where my feelings were deemed wrong, and relational existence felt forbidden, even though it is relational where we learn feelings at all, I grew up with nothing to relate to, but my Parents dead eyes & my sisters' compulsive competition. True or not, safety meant severing ties with emotions, taming them into submission. And so, I perch at the aquarium's base, a detached observer of a world where you play out your roles as fish, knowing I was supposed to as well.

Don't mistake my vantage point for a claim of superiority; I am rock bottom. I once tried to & swam with the rest until I found myself flailing out and under the tank's bottom. There, I sat, a mechanical observer in death, watching the rhythm of those swimming above. The natural order that effortlessly adheres to most seems completely elusive to me— an anarchist; but I think it is likely brain damage & autism from the Smirnoff bottle of my mother's womb where I developed & concussions I sustained after. I observe the absent-minded strokes of many, a collective drifting in false consciousness, consumed by societal conditioning that leads us by instinct to devour one another.

I embraced the label of a broken & dead depreciated fish, using it to anchor myself at the bottom, where you saw me as worthless—labeled by society as a loser, a collection of stereotypes clinging to me, first through my mother's judgments & then from my own love for suffering. As you all swam, propelled by a desire for a summit & some claim to materiel success, I witnessed the relentless ascent. You threw down any fish, any being, obstructing your path, all in pursuit of the peak in the name of affluence & air the surface of our oceans, as if the Gold of the sun could save you.

The Pathology of Madness

My mother, driven by the delusion for this top-tier lifestyle on the surface, drank herself to death, her swim towards the Sun gilding the sea level was created by my father and died with him because she couldn't continue without him. My sister, empowered by lies and theft, fabricated an FBI agent persona for the same deceptive climb towards the Sun. From the depths, I observed the devouring and being devoured of all of you, all for the pursuit of a pinnacle that is an impossible and a foolish goal, a dream we all believe to help us ignore the pain of averageness, and tragically embedded in our instinct for survival.

A simple fish, upon reaching the surface, discovers they can't breathe and witnesses the consequence of their rise to the top—drowning in Air, just as they were born, but now surrounded by the remnants of those they consumed and stepped on, on the way up.

Once I swam with you, I tried to convince my fish that I, too, was worthy of love. But amidst the currents, a doubt crept in — was I even a fish? Accepting the label of nothingness became my refuge, granting me a unique view from the depths, where safety was found in silently observing the chaos above.

In this vast tank disguised as an ocean, the pursuit of a surface that promised liberation left a trail of disarray. Trapped, we all suffocated under the weight of desires for something else, learning to consume our own kind for the illusion of a dream.

The most interesting part of choosing a spot at the bottom is the paradox it reveals those still swimming above look down with a misplaced sense of goodwill, thinking you need help, wondering if you are broken for not yearning for what they do. Yet, their true intentions gradually surface. The bottom, it turns out, is a captivating place, not for its emptiness, but for the stark humanity it lays bare — the raw capability of the fucking horribleness of human beings & their self-interests.

SYMPHONY OF THE SELF APOCLYPSE

The Pathology of Madness

In 2020 we all lost our minds- for me it was in my makeshift home office, once a sanctuary, morphed into an unexpected warzone. The unfortunate twist came as its comfort was abruptly shattered, violated rudely by the invasive tendrils of pizza party managers watercooler gossip—the very cancer I had skillfully avoided in my physical workplace due to its capacity to incite comforting dreams of swift suicide or violence in me.

My job was untangling the labyrinth of internet connections and coaxing reluctant email servers to cooperate, all while navigating the challenges of remote work during the pandemic. This role, a departure from the corporate world & career I had initially pursued for the sake of my children, had become my haven in its simplicity & my purposeful need to save energy, a space where I could channel it into both work and family.

Hierarchy, whether in the natural order of humans or the confining expectations of titles, has always eluded my understanding & drained me, which led to my burn out working for Government years beforehand, a mask that didn't suit my spirit in the first place. I've frequently taken on the Auto Pilot role of an observer, skeptical of the unearned credit afforded to those deemed crucial in Title rather actual skill. My knee-high Doc Martens and my unapologetic attitude towards the principle of "if you act dumb, you get treated dumb" have led me into too many HR meetings. This, unfortunately, is a symptom of the trauma I've been healing from since my teens—a transformation from a once meek and shy individual who couldn't utter a "No" to someone who had to learn the delicate art of assertiveness after an era of being called “too cruel”. The truth of transforming the self-revealed to me in the rebellious strands of black that adorned my hair first during middle school—an act of defiance, my initial call to power. In that simple & dramatic choice, I embarked on a journey to empathize with the death of my former self, a symbolic expression of mourning that suited the lame melodramatic & hormonal poetry of my diary. It was a deliberate step away from my mother's expectations for me to embody a class act, an attempt to startle the popular girls, and a manifestation of my love for punk rock—a genre that provided more solace than the people surrounding me.

A declaration of independence from societal norms and an assertion of my individuality. This act of rebellion marked the inception of a personal revolution, a journey where I sought to define myself on my terms, navigating the delicate balance between expectation and authenticity. The black hair dye became a visual anthem, a tangible representation of my defiance, resilience, and the beginning of a quest for self-discovery.

This evolution became a balancing act through my adulthood that I hadn't quite mastered during my time in government. The transition from timidity to asserting myself came with its own set of challenges, particularly in navigating the intricacies of workplace dynamics. The knee-high Doc Martens, once a symbol of rebellion and self-empowerment, became a manifestation of the fine line I walked between self-assertion and the expectations of a more traditional environment. The journey to find equilibrium in expressing my true self while navigating the complex terrain of professional life.

But in all honesty, it just turned into a self-care need of mine to tell a boss to fuck off.

The Pathology of Madness

Breaking my own cardinal rule—“don’t shit where you eat”—I forged friendships with my coworkers. This was the year I dared to throw myself a birthday party, an untouched world free from my sister's need to claim success at my expense, none of these people knew who I was or who she was, I was free from her official narrative of using me as an excuse. For years, I had diligently built a stable foundation for my family, ensuring they lacked nothing, I had worked hard from the absolute bottom with no family support & was in a place I could truly call home. It was time to choose things for myself, to try & learn how to revel in luxuries that served no purpose but my own pleasure—a telescope and a dress so delightful I wore it for three consecutive days, even sleeping in it. It was the very first time I bought something for me. I have never been a materialistic person, but it was my first step into learning attachment.

However, the tranquility shattered one morning. Messages flooded the work chat, screenshots revealing middle management gossiping about me, laughing and mocking in the public forum in front of All Staff. This wasn't their first transgression; they had once invaded my private messages to blame a male coworker for harassment of me just to get rid of him, sharing my messages publicly without my knowledge & had a bet going on who they thought I was hooking up with, a secret revealed to me by a drunk coworker. The unprofessional atmosphere, once a run-of-the-mill pizza party joint with a shitty foosball table, had devolved into a chaotic hellhole where HR was a bell joke and investigations happened only through those perpetuating the issues.

Summoning every manager involved, I demanded a meeting to address the situation, only to have blame deflected onto the employees who had brought the screenshots to my attention. It was at this juncture that something within me snapped. The attempts to convince me to blame the very staff who had exposed the unprofessional behavior felt like a betrayal. Little did I know, it marked the initial crack in the facade I had believed & built over the shame I believed I had healed. In that moment, something erupted from within me, a declaration that I deserved better, that we all deserved better. It was the inception of a journey where I no longer tolerated excuses, a journey that would eventually push me to the precipice of despair & discover my protection of my coworkers being scapegoated was cover for the screams of my own inner child.

Unbeknownst to me, this refusal to accept anything less than what I deserved would become the catalyst. It unraveled the carefully constructed lies and illusions that had formed the bubble of shame around my world for three decades, started first by my mom and continued by my sister. As I stood at the brink, this refusal led me down a path that ultimately tore apart the foundation I had spent a decade building, reducing it to rubble at my feet & leaving me with nothing.

This Rebellion I lead echoed a calling in me, a feeling that resonated deep within my nervous system since my earliest years, as if the universe had chosen me for once—an idea that brought me back to a time before my pessimistic skepticism, when I believed in something greater, be it God, Destiny, or a Cosmic path, there used to be something magic

The Pathology of Madness

in the universe before the night I moved out of home at 14. It harked back to my involvement in the occult, an edgy teenage pursuit to make sense of the world before my foray into philosophy and the common descent into nihilistic absurdism, a trajectory many undertake after encountering Nietzsche and Camus.

The night I moved out of home at 14 marked the end of my belief in metaphysical or magic. Anything that claims to be metaphysical is simply an excuse to deny something within yourself, a way of avoiding the responsibility for being in control of your own destiny. The truth I desperately sought as a child now lay in front of me, encapsulated in screenshots of a repugnant conversation. My coworkers, once mirrors of my younger self, were blamed for calling out the undeniable truth, and I was losing. Because the Rat don't dare give any fucking advice to the Lion.

In the impending months, the carefully crafted life I had built over the years crumbled when I finally asserted myself in the way I needed to, as I was meant to. However, this newfound empowerment was swiftly stripped away when they confined me to the psychiatric ward—a poetic curse born of trauma, a self-fulfilling prophecy. The life I had spent years being labeled crazy for saying the Truth, scapegoated by my family & gaslit by those who turned a blind eye to my mother's drinking, now became a weapon wielded by my adult sister.

The sun hung low on that day, casting long shadows across the room where a wolf spider had decided to crawl out of the floor as I waited for my sisters call, draped in the mask of her LA artist persona which always meant she had an ego on from dating a Celebrity instead of her usual meek & annoying way of asking me for money, I sat amidst the chaos of abstract canvases and scattered papers of my computer utterly defeated by it all. The air was thick with tension, a palpable sense that something was about to unfold.

"Phoenix Rising," she murmured over a Facebook Call, her eyes gleaming with a mysterious fervor. "I can take over your staff takeover."

I, a weary single mother grappling with the recent theft of \$10,000 from my employer, fighting for 3 months felt a twinge of relief for once. My sister had never been one to help; she was always on the receiving end, constantly in need of money due to her tiresome excuses. Most of the time, I'd reluctantly give in, just to be rid of her. Change on the horizon was something my exhaustion was ready to believe, and my sister's proposition held the promise of genuine help instead of being a hindrance. Little did I know this would be the catalyst for a descent into a surreal realm of paranoia and manipulation.

As she delved into the intricacies of the plan, the shadows seemed to elongate, foreshadowing the storm that awaited. Her eyes flickered with an intensity that bordered on the manic. "The rockstar," she kept muttering, the one she was helping her girlfriend to blame in their documentary- her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. "They're in your social media, manipulating your art fans, orchestrating a bizarre online symphony."

The Pathology of Madness

Confusion etched my face, and a chill ran down my spine. "What the hell are you talking about?"

In a sudden frenzy, she demanded access to my passwords, an urgent plea fueled by a paranoia I couldn't comprehend. Against my better judgment, I relented, handing her the keys to my digital profiles, just to calm her down.

The days that followed unfolded in a surreal dance. Flirtatious messages, supposedly from me, emerged online, weaving a web of betrayal, I changed all my passwords and kicked her out of my accounts. I felt broken, as if reality itself had crumbled beneath my feet. The weight of it all pushed me to the brink, writing a letter to end the turmoil of my life, but having dealt with suicidal ideation from CPTSD since a young age, I instead booked a doctor's appointment and asked my friend to babysit so I could get my head straight.

In a sterile doctor's office, I spilled a bizarre tale, attempting to make sense of the madness. The skeptical gaze of the doctor amplified the absurdity of my narrative. As the scene unfolded, it became clear that not only was I fighting against external chaos but also an internal struggle, a battle against the erosion of reality and the unsettling notion that understanding was slipping away, leaving me adrift in a sea of uncertainty.

My sister, driven by her own shortcomings, exaggerated and dramatized my struggles to divert attention from her own failings, an opportunity to hide & cement her flamboyant artist mask. The stability I had painstakingly built, and had been credited to her through, was now used to maintain the facade of a lavish LA artist lifestyle for her equally delusional celebrity girlfriend. It's as Oscar Wilde said, "If you tell the truth, make them laugh, or they'll kill you."

The truth, a dangerous weapon can sound absurd to those viewing it from the outside, who usually project their own motives into the people who speak it & becomes a means to obscure reality and sustain illusions meticulously crafted by those unwilling to confront their own shortcomings. When you detach yourself and stay true to the facts, you become the perceived enemy of those fish who dream—the ones mindlessly swimming towards whatever shines the brightest only to be devoured by a well-versed predator of the depth, a fish chasing a dream through someone else is usually oblivious to the deeper currents beneath the surface. It raises a timeless question: if the truth can dismantle what we've built, was the delusional shine they swam towards truly worth preserving in the first place? Should we not create the light ourselves & forget the surface? And whose fault is it, the one eating or those who are stupid enough to chase something not theirs and leave themselves open to be eaten?

Growing up in an abusive home mold us into truth seekers yet blinds us to predatory behavior. We become meticulous keepers of facts, hoarding paperwork and meticulously bookkeeping, a trauma response I now cling to in the face of the impending destruction of my life.

THE ANARCHY OF CHILDHOOD

Punk rock and music have always held more truth for me than words ever could. I often believe that those of us who embrace a style of dressing adorned with skulls and studs, reveling in our status as freaks, weirdos, and oddities in the world, do so as a kind of animalistic defensive mechanism. It's as if we present a tough exterior to conceal the inner rebellion of our own sensitivity & a testament to our strength against the general public's judgment. Dying my hair black and opting for an electric guitar over the IPL laser my mom insisted I get to rid me of my freckles were my first physical acts of rebellion. My mother fixated on physical beauty, a trait that saved her in her marriage to my wealthy but corpulent father. To many, she was labeled a home wrecker, thanks to my dad's previous marriage, and a mistress due to her beauty. Throughout my childhood, she tried fervently to impose this ideal on me, but my sister, eager to please her and maintain the blame game against me, followed suit.

Truth is, I was born on the wrong side of the bed, an unabashedly weird kid, ungrateful in the eyes of my family, discarding dolls and repurposing a Barbie dreamhouse into a lizard habitat with lighting or burying my mom's fine China in the garden when her socialite lifestyle became more important to uphold than seeing me as a kid. My mother, often stressed by my eccentricities in front of her friends, nicknamed me Ladybug a median between cuteness of what should be a toddler to my strangeness, and due to my initials—B.U.G. I ran towards spiders and snakes, creatures she found unsettling, and I wonder now if their emotionless eyes resonated with hers & I found safety in something else dangerous.

While the physical manifestations of my identity emerged later in life, the emotional rebellion began early. They say trauma begets complexity of the mind, and being misunderstood becomes the tax we pay for this intricate internal world.

The embrace of my earliest sanctuary was found within the worn pages of books, tales that whisked me away from the tumultuous shit brewing at home. Following the untimely departure of our father, our family- My Mom, Sister & I returned to Australia, bidding farewell to the comforting presence of extended family. A decision that puzzled me until my uncle, a tall and quietly strong figure with a history in federal service, shared a revelation on the porch of the house my sister coerced my cousin into buying in 20201 on the narrative I was disabled. He pointed out the dichotomy of our family's generational trauma, choosing to distance himself while confiding in my curiosity about our Oma's hidden Nazi memorabilia. His words echoed on a porch, "We are introverts, Bryton. Your mother was an extrovert, valuing social acceptance more than you or I."

The threads of our family's hidden history started to unravel after my mother's passing. Overheard drunken conversations and her posthumous journal laid bare the struggles that had been concealed from my childhood gaze, the same as how adult jokes fly over our head in our favorite childhood films. Yet, it wasn't until the cusp of adulthood that I

The Pathology of Madness

acknowledged how willingly I had turned a blind eye to these harsh realities, all in pursuit of finding love in the darkest corners of my childhood home.

And so those like me often find Books were our steadfast companions, from German fairy tales my Oma left me with sinister twists to my dad's war novels and my own cherished selections borrowed from the library like "Stellaluna," a bat navigating the world of birds, and a book chronicling the atomic bombs of Hiroshima.

Even in the playground of preschool, I danced to the beat of my own color palette. While the air buzzed with the conventional pink and blue declarations, I stood on my ground, proudly proclaiming my love for green. It wasn't just a color; it was a rebellion painted with the hues of my secret garden that I escaped too and the adventures of a black cat battling the briny sea in my favorite picture book at the time, though the instinct built into all of us wanted me to also say "Pink" was my favorite color like the other children.

In the intricate dance of conformity, I found my first rebellion early on. The desire to "fit in" shouldn't be shamed; it's a universal instinct, but one I found myself fighting against for the love of my family would only be found for the performance they wanted & I rejected. Conformity is natural, and not something to be ashamed of, it becomes an instinctual dance, a magnetic pull drawing individuals into the collective rhythm of the crowd's orbit. This dance reflects the innate human quest for acceptance, choreographing well-practiced societal steps to evade the dissonance of nonconformity. While it offers comfort in fitting in, it simultaneously constrains individual expression. The dance prompts reflection on conformity's dual role—a source of collective strength and a potential shackle on personal freedom. Here, we navigate the delicate balance between unity and the suppression of individuality.

Humans, finely attuned to patterns, operate with a collective safety in mind. As pack animals, we subconsciously detect deviations and often ostracize them for the sake of a "collective goal." Indeed, humans are often described as pack animals though we like to forget that we too are animals who developed consciousness from curiosity, reflecting our social nature and the tendency to form communities. Our characterization draws parallels to other social species, like wolves, where individuals work together for the collective benefit of the group. Humans, too, exhibit this social instinct, forming complex societies, communities, and families to enhance survival, share resources, and fulfill emotional needs. This inclination towards social bonds has played a crucial role in shaping human behavior and cooperation throughout our evolutionary history. Every aspect of our being is designed for subconscious understanding and reading of our surroundings. The whites of our eyes and the sclera serve to spot distant gazes, while uneasy feelings about someone may stem from subtle judgments based on micro expressions learned from parents or authority figures in childhood. Growing up in unsafe environments sharpens our ability to decipher the nuances of people's behavior, and we become hyper-attuned to these unconscious judgments, sometimes unfairly projecting them onto others.

The Pathology of Madness

Fast-forward to my teenage years, and my fondness for green took a darker twist, evolving into a fixation on Arsenic Green. This wasn't your average pigment; it was a vibrant accomplice with a notorious past, dubbed "Scheele's Green" or "Paris Green." Crafted from arsenic compounds, it infiltrated fabrics, adorned wallpapers, and even sweetened confectionery. But behind the allure lurked a malevolent secret—linked to sickness and demise. The wealthy, surrounded by arsenic-laden opulence, unwittingly embraced its toxicity for the appearance of Status. What once symbolized affluence transformed into a silent and deadly companion for society's elite, which is exactly what I hated in my own Mother.

This twisted narrative mirrored the masked affluence and subservience that ensnared her—an unfortunate tale she projected, eventually succumbing to its lethal grip of trying to live up to my Father's name, rather seeing the beautiful reality she could've had with her kids if she had accepted the loss of the lifestyle he provided and saw the one to build as a single mother to her two daughter, like I did. The echoes of this dark dance reverberated through my life, intertwining with my rebellious spirit.

Grade one brought me face to face with religious conformity in the form of hymns about Jesus and hell. Unenthused, I sought solace in the library, discovering St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, marking the inception of my defiance against the enforced religious narrative. This dance with conformity became a recurring theme in my life, an intricate balance between assimilation and the preservation of individuality. I chose him to pray too instead of the God I was baptized too.

In one of the books my Oma had given me as a kid, there was a story about a forgotten stone: this is the best of my recollection of the story:

In the heart of the mystical Ravenwood Forest, there lay a hidden gem known as the Cimmerian Crystal. This extraordinary stone possessed an otherworldly luminescence, casting an arcane glow that whispered secrets to those who dared to listen. However, the surroundings of the Cimmerian Crystal were far from welcoming – twisted roots and darkened shadows cloaked the enchanted grove.

The inhabitants of Ravenwood despised the Crystal for its light- a mysterious radiance, which exposed the shadows lurking within them. The other stones, resentful of their own mundane existence, grumbled in jealousy. The ancient, gnarled trees, resentful of their inability to capture the crystal's enigmatic light, cast shadows & ominous spells to shroud it in darkness.

The Pathology of Madness

But the Cimmerian Crystal, oblivious to the occult animosity surrounding it, continued to emanate its mystical glow. Unaware of its own magical potential, the Crystal stood as an enigma, waiting to be unlocked.

One fateful night, a wise sorceress sensed the turmoil within Ravenwood. She saw beyond the jealousy and bitterness, recognizing the true power that resided within the Cimmerian Crystal. With a heart attuned to the arcane, she decided to unveil Crystal's secrets to the enchanted forest.

Under the moonlit sky, she gathered the stones and trees for a mystical gathering. She spoke of ancient prophecies and the untapped magic that the Crystal held. She revealed how the Crystal's luminance could dispel the darkness within each creature and transform Ravenwood into a realm of unparalleled enchantment.

As her words resonated through the grove, a spellbinding transformation began. The stones, once resentful, started to absorb the radiant energy of the Crystal, evolving into enchanted talismans that glimmered with newfound magic. The trees, no longer envious, embraced the arcane whispers and entwined their roots with the Crystal, creating an occult connection that revitalized the entire forest.

The Cimmerian Crystal, once shunned and misunderstood, became the focal point of Ravenwood's occult harmony. The grove now pulsated with mystical energy, and the creatures within it discovered their own latent powers. The stones and trees, now attuned to the arcane forces, recognized the Cimmerian Crystal as a beacon of their shared magic.

And so, the once-misunderstood Crystal became a symbol of unity and power, guiding Ravenwood into an era of enchantment. In the secret heart of the forest, the Cimmerian Crystal stood as a testament to the transformative magic that can be found when one embraces the occult mysteries within.

Within our own luminosity, lies a paradoxical beauty—an acknowledgment that our light, though capable of unsettling shadows, also holds the potential to bring about peace and understanding, both within ourselves and in the hearts of those touched by our radiance.

THE STATUS VEIL

The Status Veil in our family life wove a complex tapestry of appearances, hidden struggles, and the interplay of privilege and pain. Upon relocating to Australia, my mother isolated my sister and me in Runaway Bay, a coastal town where social standing was dictated by contributions to the nation's expansion, export, and trade.

The Pathology of Madness

Unlike the apparent glamour of Hollywood, Australia's elite only comprises the families entrenched in Meat, Property, and Politics having no real “Fame” or city that encompasses the Capitalistic values of Hollywood. Our move to an apartment in Runaway Bay next to my dad's development Sanctuary Cove seemed like a step into a privileged world, yet beneath the veneer lay a reality marred by profound issues, in the image my mother wanted to project of herself, rather than the reality she needed to accept.

As I recounted this memory & move in 1995 to my uncle, on my cousin's porch in America, he revealed to me my mother's long-standing battle with heavy drinking, dating back to her early teens. My half-sister, from my father's second marriage, disclosed that both my father and mother struggled with alcohol even during her pregnancy. It's a dark truth I now share with humor, recognizing the impact it had on my development, I like to crack a joke now and then, blaming my strangeness on the 'vodka womb' experience. You know, because a good dose of dark humor is the only way to survive a messed-up situation. It's the kind of coping mechanism that trauma-savvy individuals get.

But here we are in 2024, drowning in a sea of perfectionism and people willingly casting themselves as perpetual victims. We don't see the real results of surviving trauma which is we do embrace all kinds of darkness in each other. It ticks me off. Real empowerment and healing mean owning up to the messy, imperfect self. I find it amusing how some can't handle a good laugh, especially at things that might make others squirm. Guess what? Humor, just like healing, is damn subjective & can't follow one simple guideline. If someone's trying to rein in your self-expression, bet they've never stared down their own shadows. Instead, they're stuck in this fantasy of projecting a holier-than-thou, sin-free image. Because let's be real, confronting your own demons is a messy business, and laughter is often the best way to wade through the chaos.

I've coined the term 'Status Veil' to aptly describe the disconnect between our external image and the harsh reality within our home. In Runaway Bay, where gossip travels fast, we lived in the dichotomy of privilege and dysfunction. There was no middle ground; you either lived on the beach or in the country.

Initially, my childhood had moments of joy—running on the bay, catching crabs with our babysitter, Sue, a burly woman with her own battles with alcohol. She became a true Australian friend, nicknaming my sister, her daughter and me 'ratbags.' However, Sue, with her struggles, would become one of the worst enablers of my mom's alcoholism.

As my mother's drinking escalated when I was around 5, our idyllic moments faded. Sue, a constant presence, became more of a guardian than my mother though an also seriously flawed individual. The unraveling intensified with my mother forgetting to pick us up from school. We became the last kids in after-school care, dreading the erratic clicks of my mother's heels and the swerving drive home, a traumatic experience that still haunts me & puts me to sleep when I travel now.

During this tumultuous time, my mother attempted to introduce my sister to theatre, where I discovered my love for singing. Yet, this pursuit of artistic expression didn't last, mirroring the fleeting nature of stability within our family.

The Pathology of Madness

The Status Veil concealed our struggles, creating an illusion of privilege while masking the harsh realities we faced. Even seemingly innocent childhood pastimes were overshadowed by the turmoil beneath the surface. The picturesque coastal setting served as a backdrop to a turbulent life defined by alcoholism, neglect, and a relentless pursuit of normalcy amid chaos, but no one was ready to see through it for the Saviour of my father's name & ghost my mother perpetually chased.

Defining the Term 'Status Veil'

The term 'Status Veil' suggests a metaphorical barrier created by the external appearance of privilege and societal standing, concealing the true and often troubling reality within the confines of one's home. It symbolizes the disconnect between the outward image of success or affluence and the hidden struggles that individuals may be facing behind closed doors.

In addition to this veil, there exists a phenomenon known as 'Status Apologists.' These individuals, driven by their own human instinct to survive, pursue status or titles, often hold the misguided belief that someone with status has it all together. This inherent bias blinds them to the harsh realities of the behaviors and actions of those with elevated social standing. The allure of status, coupled with the subconscious desire to associate with success, becomes a blinder, preventing these apologists from recognizing or acknowledging the problematic and distressing truths that lie beneath the surface.

The Status Veil, combined with the influence of Status Apologists, perpetuates a cycle where the external façade of success remains intact, even as it shields the hidden struggles and indiscretions that continue to fester within the confines of seemingly privileged lives.

THE WIRE MOTHER

From the very beginning, my sister carried an innate competitiveness that felt unjust to solely lay blame on her. The absence of our mother created a vacuum, turning our home into a battlefield for attention. The simplest route for her to be acknowledged was to have whatever she desired. As a silent observer, I took on the role of an older sister, understanding that this competitiveness was a survival instinct around our mother. It became a necessary tactic for one of us to receive any semblance of love, and so, I would let her have it.

The Pathology of Madness

This role was my attempt to shield her from the harsh realities of our family dynamic. Early on, I sensed that something was profoundly amiss. My love for her took the form of providing the foundational support she seemed desperately in need of—support that our mother, due to my rejection of her begged-for performances, would not give to me.

In moments when my sister and I were alone, she transformed into a shy and meek individual, relying on me to speak for her or find us food. However, in the presence of our mother, she morphed into the performer she so desired to be. It was a complex mix of survival and seeking approval, revealing the intricate dynamics that shaped our family relationships.

From the earliest days, if I landed a lead role in theatre, it triggered a tantrum. Every toy that was mine became hers with just a desire, and I recall a bizarre attempt to bribe me into stopping a particular funny face that used to grab mom's attention. As we grew older, it escalated into something darker, something people can see today in the witness statements she has gathered against me from people I have never met or talked to, an echo of my mom's cries to call me crazy because I dared stand for myself against her drinking. I vividly remember being around the piano, auditioning for Annie, and the room fell silent. Everyone turned to me, asking for an encore. It wasn't the fear of singing that made me run off; The realization that my singing would lead to a physical attack from my sister lingered in my mind. As I aged, it became simpler to yield to her demands, and an empathetic understanding of her desperate need for love gradually took root within me. I comprehended, to some extent, that she craved the minuscule remnants of love that still lingered in our home, even if it was solely expressed through performance—a stage I adamantly refused to step onto.

As the impact of our mother's growing inability to love due to her alcohol-induced apathy became apparent, my sister found herself compelled to compulsively lie. The drunk apathy left no room for performances or displays of affection. In this environment, lying became a survival mechanism for my sister, a way to navigate a world where love was scarce, and our mother's emotional availability was dwindling. This revelation deepened my understanding of the complex dynamics within our family, shedding light on the coping strategies we adopted in the face of our mother's diminishing ability to connect.

My childhood home, the one we moved into when I was 6, after Runaway Bay, bought with my Oma's money, was a beachside townhouse on Aloha Lane in a cocky suburb called Main Beach. At times, it felt like a sociological experiment, akin to one I read about when I was 13 to understand my mother's drinking. This house, however, became the epicenter of the spiraling descent into nightmare territory as my mother's drinking took a darker turn. Humans, it seems, are genetically hardwired to love their caregivers, no matter how flawed they might be. The ongoing debate of nature versus nurture and the creation of messed-up human beings somehow seemed intertwined with my experiences. Genetics play a more significant role in shaping our personalities than we'd like to admit. Love, comfort, and safety emerge as necessities for survival, as demonstrated by the experiment. It was initially hypothesized that the monkey would learn to love the uncomfortable wire mother out of a survival necessity & the comforting cloth mother who didn't provide a necessity like food

The Pathology of Madness

would not be attached to, but the researcher was proven wrong. Both nurture and sustenance are vital for survival.

I couldn't help but draw parallels between our dynamics and Harry Harlow's Cloth Monkey Experiment. The desperate need for comfort, the competition for attention, and the yearning for emotional security echoed the monkeys' struggle in Harlow's study. It was a reminder of the profound impact maternal care and emotional support have on psychological well-being—beyond the basic needs of nourishment. Harlow's research illuminated the intricacies of attachment theory, a lens through which I could better understand the complexities of caregiving, love, and the lasting echoes of my upbringing.
