

Procrastibation

the pleasure of escape.

"We're more aware of our vulnerability than other organisms. No wonder we feel the urge to escape"

(Sherman, 2020)

Our lives are chaotic and often uncontrollable. We try to take command, acting as if we have dominion. When control fails, we make attempts to escape, often succumbing to base nature - behaviour that provides emotion, satisfaction, carnal desires of sustenance, combat, pleasure. Or simply just run away. Performing actions that aid our fallacy of authority.

When the outside world is overwhelming, we retreat inwards, choosing the most innate part of ourselves to escape within.

Paul is the old white guy she married seemingly decades ago. He's saggy and balding. Of course, he doesn't give her pleasure anymore, she can't really remember if he ever did. It's just convenient; he's an annoying habit. Paul is embedded in her life. It'd be so much effort to leave Paul even though every movement, every breath, every sound he makes causes her eyes to retreat into her skull with irritation. At least he's a familiar irritant, one she knows how to live with. Being left to irritate herself could be ten times worse.

Jarrad is the neighbour she fantasizes about. Through her bedroom window she can see his muscles rippling as he gardens. She'll never touch him because Sarah across the way got caught fucking him by her Paul (maybe his name was Frank— it doesn't matter anyway – all rich, entitled old white men had become Paul). Sarah was kicked out with no divorce settlement. Now Sarah lives in Hull. She couldn't go through that. It'd be too much effort to even approach Jarrad, then to be found out and moved to Hull – or even worse Jarrad might not fancy her, a fate too embarrassing to consider. She knows fantasies are her only real option, safe fantasy.

She won't bother leaving Paul so she'll just hurt him until he cracks. She won't lay a finger on him (not that she has in the last 20 years) just lie in bed all day. Dream of Jarrad and fuck herself, make herself cum loud so Paul can hear her while he reads the paper, while he's on his work calls, while he cooks dinner. She won't leave the bed for anything, she'll ignore him when he comes in the room, when he calls her name, when he cries. She ignores him. Lets him leave, watches him come back – she won't stop fucking herself. One day maybe after months he'll finally snap, he'll attack her – she won't stop fucking herself – she'll keep cumming – he'll sit on the floor and pull his hair out. He'll call doctors, he'll try to fuck her himself. She'll ignore him and just keep cumming. Once Paul's driven himself mad with anger and lust, he'll realize that she just doesn't want him. All she wants is to pleasure herself. Hopefully, he'll curl up in the corner and die (or better jump off a bridge so she doesn't have to deal with the body). He'll just expire.

"Tamed as it may be, sexuality remains one of the most demonic forces of human consciousness."

(Sontag, 1967)

Annie Sprinkle is a multi-media artist, eco-sexologist and an influential figure in the post-Porn movement. Her piece '101 Uses For Sex' (1991) offers no judgment, simply stating 41 functions of sex. The word 'Uses' indicates that sex can operate as a tool in one's life. It is significant that a large percentage of the list refers to using sex as an escape or for personal gain. For example:

- '6. Sex to relieve boredom,'
- '8. Sex to make money,'
- '10. Sex for manipulation,'
- '25. Sex as an anti-depressant,'
- '41. Sex to avoid working.'

In this list Sprinkle dismisses the nuances and controversy of sex and sexuality by omission.

Sprinkle recognises the power in sex, masturbation and pleasure and doesn't shy away from its capabilities, no matter how taboo. Sprinkle's performance 'The Legend of the Ancient Sacred Prostitute' was a performed masturbation ritual. This was an exploration into spirituality and sexuality, Sprinkle's sexual energy. These performances were not meant to simply turn strangers on, they were an examination of "*something that's usually done alone in the dark, putting a microscope on it*" (Annie Sprinkle). Sprinkle aimed to take the stigma out of masturbation and celebrate the ritual and all it can achieve. In this performance, Sprinkle does the opposite of escaping. She is fully present with her body as a form of empowerment. Exploring the power in masturbation and self-pleasure.

"There are many unhealthy ways to escape so "masturbation might serve as a more effective substitute for risky behavior."

(Kaestle, Allen, 2011)

I daydream about kidnapping, not in a sexual way (not completely). Never the act of the kidnapping, more the place I would be kept: a box room or small basement, a catflap in the dark door for food, peeling walls, a bucket in the corner, blanket on the floor. These fantasies were obviously hijacked from films or TV shows; romanticized Stockholm syndrome resulting in a valiant attempt at escape. I never imagine my escape nor my captor. I don't see the point. I just imagine being confined without control.

There is no way to return to the days of your childhood. There is no way to unlearn what you know. Once you understand the cost of rent, that chocolate you like, the film you want to make you can't erase that knowledge. There comes a point, the point at adulthood where you are expected to make decisions, decide your life, what are you going to eat for lunch? what about tomorrow dinner? Breakfast? next Wednesday's meal? what do you think you'll fancy then? Now go to the shop and plan that out, forget what you might crave that day, forget spur of the moment, forget being lazy and forget not having think about anything. When you're standing at that till think about how many hours you worked for that bottle of Vodka. Is your favourite snack worth half an hour of your life? Think about having to put all the food you're spending your hours on into the cupboard, think about how you'll stack them, think about using up most of the food over the next week think about watching the other stuff rot. Think about having to stand at the same till next week, weighing up the same problems. But isn't next week rent week?

Think about every decision, every worry about things you have absolutely no control over. Think about all the self-help adverts trying to convince you that you have choice, autonomy, control. They convince may you, but in reality you will always be going to the shop and weighting up what you want to eat, every decision.

I don't want to think about what to eat anymore. I don't want to feel guilty for lying in bed all day with my hand inside myself. I don't want to have to decide what bit of mindless housework I want to do. I want to be told. I want to return to the time I didn't realize was so easy. I want set chores, chores where someone else will care what I do, chores that if I don't do them I'm not just screwing my future self.

If I was kidnapped, I would be terrified, stuck in a room where I don't have to make decisions. My autonomy gone. I have no real autonomy anyway, at least when I'm kidnapped I wouldn't have to stress over the fake decisions. If I was kidnapped I'd finally be free to do nothing.

"Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does."

(Sartre, 1943)

Perhaps we are all guilty of submitting to a form of Stockholm syndrome, falling in love with our chosen belief systems, in our politics, with our religion. Submitting and loving the safety it gives us by dictating our views. Retreating to the secure confinement of self-rioting bliss.

"In this cocoon, this turtle shell, this mental home, she is protected. Given the gift of this protection, she can then be free."

(Gross, 2018)

"When you're living so intensely in your head there isn't any difference between what you imagine and what actually takes place. Therefore, you're both omnipotent and powerless."

(Kraus, 1997)

"Ours is the age of contagious anxiety. A deep and ever deepening worry about the state of the world, and our place in it, or placelessness"

(Shafak, 2020)

When fear and discouragement are rife is it a wonder, we want to escape or avoid? Retreat within, both mentally and physically. Abandon anxiety in a fearless attempt at joyful diversion.

"To those who say that escaping is not courageous, we answer: what is not escape and social investment at the same time?"

(Deleuze, Guattari. 1977)

I am lost, floating through the sea of temporality until a little boy in a boat comes to my rescue.

She has a window, it's a typical rectangular plastic situation. It looks out west or east (she doesn't know) onto the grey flat roof and the grey flat garden. Past the decaying garden wall sit grey flat-flats, 60s new builds with less soul than a corpse. In the summer, sunsets light the greyness up in an amber glow which radiates into her bedroom filling it with sticky resin. It is not summer. The grey stays firmly grey.

Her corner desk folds itself into the space between the window and the wall. It is her office, her studio, her lab. Contained in that corner, in that laptop, lives her obligations, her emails, her deadlines - her stress. Outside the door there are plans, people waiting to see her, to 'check in', their metaphorical hands scrabbling at her door, clawing for attention.

She sits on her bed and looks at the flat window and its desk burdened with duty. she doesn't want to be there, sat at the cheap swivel chair allowing her head be filled with thoughts she doesn't particularly want to think right now. She doesn't want to be on the other side of the door either, she doesn't want to think at all.

This desire not to think can start in the head, or with knots in the stomach, but on days like today it starts in her groin. A heaviness, a kind of subtle pressure around her clit. An itch born not from lust but from boredom. Apathy makes her horny. She can sense her vibrator burning in the top draw of the side table, ready and waiting.

She heaves herself over, opens the draw, plunges her hand inside and finds her new best friend.

She wriggles under the covers and lets out a sigh, not of relief or pleasure just a sigh of 'well at least this will kill half an hour'. Maybe she will be in a better mood afterwards, refreshed, inspired - ready to work... maybe? It hadn't been successful before, but this time could be different, this time she might let off some steam and bounce back all zesty with ideas.

It does not work. She has a nap.

*"For Warhol, fucking was less about desire than it was about killing time..
For Cornell, desire was sharpness, a tear in the static of everyday life."*

(Nelson, 2009)

But can it not be both? If you remove the other parties from the 'fucking'. Masturbation can fill the void of time with the keenness of satisfaction.

Moira Roth's essay 'The Aesthetic of Indifference' (1977) describes an artistic shift in the 1950's as a result of the alienating effect of the Cold war and a dislocation between art and politics. Seemingly born out of anarchism, dislodgement, total political paralysis and perhaps self-preservation. Roth defines "*indifference as a virtue, as the correct way to deal with an uncertain world.*" It is a form of escapism, to run away from the fears, of everyday life. When one is so disenchanted by the tumult or the monotony of life, indifference acts as a welcome departure.

In Ottessa Moshfegh's book 'My year of Rest and Relaxation' (2018) the privileged narrator escapes the disorder of the world, cloaking her misery, by drugging herself into an almost comatose state of sleep for a year. The deadpan narration of her complete alienation illustrates a satirical glorification of escapism. In her ability to "*ignore things that didn't concern*" her, she exposes her self-obsession. This acts as a lens through which we can observe the egoism of the American pre 9/11, success obsessed culture Perhaps the novel is a paradigm, enacting a hedonistic form of escape; of which most of the population could never manage and may never want.

Most recent studies show that young peoples fear for the future has exponentially grown in the last few years. (Prince's Trust & YouGov, 2020)

*"Masturbation in its many varieties is escapism;"
"an escape from an environment filled with fear."*

(Sherman, 2020)
(Fister. Weiss.)

When life becomes overwhelming you can nearly always find a moment of satisfaction with yourself.

They had all agreed it was all too much. It needed to end. They needed a break. Nobody was happy.

There were petitions and riots and strikes, but that hadn't tipped the leaders over the edge. The boredom of being forced to discuss the repetitious complaints, coupled with their own futile existence had. Generations had passed like they were on hold; noise which sometimes resembled music on repeat, vaguely waiting for someone-anyone to answer, becoming increasingly irritated yet slowly forgetting the initial ailment. Everyone agreed it was tedious and overwhelming, either caring or having to pretend to care about other people. They knew they would be much happier focusing on their individual onerous lives. Much happier fixating on their own pleasure.

The UN and all the heads of state met for the first time ever in February, after days of discussion it was announced. The news had blared across TV screens, phones, laptops (and for the old-fashioned) newspapers.

'BREAKING NEWS: EVERYONE RETURN TO YOUR HOUSES AND GO FUCK YOURSELF.'

There was initial indignation and apprehension, especially in the more conservative areas of the world. Many did not agree with the proposed solution. But then again many had not tried it before. To combat their ignorance, educational packages sent out to every home including: instructional pamphlets, links to porn sites, complimentary sex toys and assurances that all appropriate deities had been contacted and were completely on board with the scheme. It had been one of the largest expenditures in living history, yet a necessary splurge.

There was no time-frame for the experimental scheme but there was a verbal agreement that everyone would immerse "*vell kind of whenever ve're done, I guess..*" - Merkle. It took only a week for worldwide hermitting to commence. The blueprint was executed without any major hitches, a couple thousand scuffles outside sex shops, worldwide lube shortages etcetera, but all issues abated as they all surreptitiously dribbled back to their houses, avoiding eye contact.

None of them knew how long it had been now, it no longer seemed to matter. The streets were empty as tree root burrowed through the roads. The sun blistered onto tarmac which yearned for the weight of feet. Sunbeams crept around every corner looking for skin to burn, searching in vain. Lonely cars parked in the center of roads, waiting with open doors for their owners to return. TVs left on in yawning pubs showed blank screens. Once green lawns turned the yellow of infected toenails. In the center of towns sat a hollow void where noise should have been.

The noise of before had been excessive. All encompassing. The sound had been a universal blanket wrapped so tight it had grown into the fabric of their lives. Its vapid mondain prattle belonged to their own mouths. Sound so senseless that it pushed their features inwards, noses caved into the center of faces, ears folding into their earholes, fingers, toes and penis' inhaled into the meat of the body, creating new cavities.

The only sound now was of grunts, moans, rhythmic squelching and the humming of vibrators.

They had retreated into their shells. inside they Armadilloed further; hands, wrists, forearm, bicep, shoulder engulfed by their orifices. Fingers scrabbling at their innards looking for something to hold and pull themselves deeper. Deeper. Deeper.

They became concave balls, dotted with smooth craters. Obsessed with retreating further, filling their cavities. Wrapping themselves into knots. It gave them satisfaction. Bedsores scraping at curved backbone, they wasted away, having no time for anything but to evade the memory of noise. Most of them had already shriveled like deflated footballs and ley rotting in their ooze.

They had no trace of the outside in them anymore, except the fear of a noise long forgotten.