



Keepers of private notebooks are a different breed altogether, lonely and resistant rearrangers of things, anxious malcontents, children afflicted apparently at birth with some presentiment of loss.

(Joan Didion, 'On Keeping a Notebook,'
Slouching Towards Bethlehem,
1968/2008, pp. 132-133)

Sharing as a means of
forgetting
...

'Therapy' holds us
together and stops the world
falling apart
...

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REHAB-DIARIES

6

2001

We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, and a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers . . . and also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls.

(Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, 1971/1998, p. 4)



Kuitpo Community

About Kuitpo Community

Kuitpo Community is a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation program, which operates as a Therapeutic Community. The purpose of Kuitpo Community is to provide people with the opportunity to develop and live a productive and rewarding life free of alcohol and other drugs.



Location and Facilities

Kuitpo Community is located on a 32 hectare property about 60km from the Adelaide CBD. There are facilities for up to 20 residents in the mainstream program. There are five; four bedroom homes and residents have a bedroom to themselves. Men and women share these houses. One of which is designated as a non-smoking house. There are also facilities for up to 3 parents with children in the family program. Each family lives in a house on their own.

Kuitpo community has an office and recreation hall with a pay phone that all residents can use. There are also facilities and activities to build and maintain your physical health. In addition Kuitpo Community has a well equipped and staffed workshop where skills like ceramics, woodwork, metalwork, painting and leatherwork can be learnt.

Client Group

Adults who have an identifiable, long term dependency upon alcohol, who are, or are at risk of becoming homeless. It is recognised that people wanting to overcome their addiction could expect the following outcomes during and after treatment.

- To remain abstinent from alcohol
- To regain health.
- To be away from their current environment.
- To make lifestyle changes.
- To regain control of their life.
- To have support/assistance to achieve the above.

Eligibility Criteria

Kuitpo Community has been established for adults who have not only acknowledged that substance use no longer works for them, but are willing and able to look at themselves and make changes where necessary. To be eligible for the Kuitpo Community Program you must:



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EXERCISE BOOK

160 PAGE

FEINT RULED 8mm

SPICERS
Tudor
BRAND



NAME	ANDY'S Diary
SUBJECT	
YEAR	

CONFIDENCE

Write down 4 things that you are confident at doing.

1. Using the computer
2. swimming
3. Reading & writing (study)
4. Driving / riding

Find something new that you would really like to do well. Learn what you need to do and how to do it, then do it over and over again until you are confident about doing it.

Write down 4 things that you believe you failed at in your life.

1. Relationships (intimacy)
2. Friendships (at times)
3. happiness (sustaining it)
4. career

How could you have achieved a different outcome if you had used the Four Step No Fail Formula For Life in these things?

Kuitpo Diary 1**3/11/2001****Saturday**

It's been two weeks now since I've had a drink. The last was on 20/10/01 at 11 pm, after a three-day bender and no sleep. Hopefully, the last bender!

I'm now at Kuitpo Community, otherwise known as rehab, with about nineteen other addicts. The setting is tranquil with roving hills and meadows, patches of forest, lumbering cows, and our community nestled within. We are about three-and-a-half hours away from the nearest pub by foot. There are 8 cabins here: 3 for families and 5 for general community residents. I'm in cabin 1 with Brent and Margo, both decent and friendly people. Brent has about 6 weeks to go to graduate and Margo a bit more. Considering I've only been here for three days, these guys are old hands.

It's 7.50 am and I'm up and straight—fuck, it's Saturday morning and I'm not drunk or passed out on a floor! Clarity, what a strange feeling. It's as clear as the day is sunny and fresh. Spring, it seems, has sprung.

Brent and Mark have just left to go fishing in the dam, which is one of three in a paddock of bulls. Apparently, as the story goes, Brent and Brian (who used to have the room next to me before his expulsion) caught a Murray cod. Thankfully, they released it. However, as another story goes, a couple of ex-residents caught a cod that was too large for the bathtub—this one actually died *in* the bathtub two days later. Poor bloody fish!

We are unsupervised on weekends and able to do more-or-less as we please. I'm planning to help Steve W in the veggie patch and then go to the gym.

It's such a beautiful morning. I feel as if I'm on a school camp and looking at the world through intrigued young eyes, as if there is now something to see, something other than blurring city lights and empty beer bottles, something other than chaos and disorder and lost dreams.

My sleeping patterns are rather erratic, and I'm tending to get up early. I've been dreaming of being drunk, which has been awful. I feel permanently restless, overwhelmed, and on the verge of some kind of explosion. What lies beyond I haven't a

clue—the old self trying to reassert itself? The new self attempting birth? Who will win? I don't dare bet. Only one of the two MEs has any kind of track record. The new self is up against it.

We all drink long-life milk here, which is ironic since most of us will have short lives. Only those who can win the drug battle have any kind of hope of longevity. Particularly with the whisper of addiction haunting and cajoling and coercing the inner ear. *Drink, it says, drink... Make a warm bed in the earth, retire to the abyss, reclaim the emptiness, die.*

I have no one to love.

Not even me.

4/11/01

Sunday

After beginning this diary yesterday I went down to the dam to see Brent and Mark fishing. It was bloody hot and my shoulders and neck burned. Officially, then, I'm a redneck! I then walked back to the community and helped Steve W in the veggie patch. This patch was apparently overgrown and full of weeds until Steve cleaned it up. It's great. He has strawberries, broad beans, tomato and corn seedlings, carrots, herbs, spring onions, potatoes, and so on. We planted flower seeds along the fence and tidied up. Should be good to see what comes up.

I also had a workout yesterday before revisiting the dam with Carol and her little son, Cain. Tye sat on the bank playing his guitar. 'Khe Sanh,' by Cold Chisel.

Saturday night wasn't bad. Bob and Tye came over and we all sat around (Margo included) watching *Rage*, which was featuring a heavy metal special. We talked about our messy drug and alcohol pasts. Bob is an alcoholic and speed-fiend while Tye is a heroin addict. Such talk helps establish trust and mutual respect since only other alcoholics and drug addicts can understand the bizarre isolation surrounding addiction and abstinence. Yesterday, for instance, I felt I hadn't had a drink in ages, perhaps years, when in fact it had only been 14 days. How pathetic is that! Fuck! Normal people don't see that as some kind of achievement, whereas I'm looking for a fucking trophy.

Boredom is the only danger here, even though, technically, there are numerous activities to amuse us. Perhaps it's the absence of alcohol that makes time seem so heavy and the days so long. One restless minute bunts up against the next. I walk, I workout, I clean, I write, I stare, I think, and still the day seems empty and meaningless. This is the path until I find something to strive for and believe in. The week ahead should be interesting. We will divide our time between community meetings and workshops, community projects (I'm officially the weed killer), counselling, shopping, and a recreation day on Tuesday. I may choose painting and drawing for workshop, or possibly computing. I don't bloody know.

One of Margo's sons is here and we're watching *Star Wars: Phantom Menace*. It's 10.50 am. The forecast is for 30°C. Yoda is speaking. And I don't know what this day will bring. At least I slept in until 10 am this morning!

Sleep is a sanctuary.

6/11/01

Tuesday

Yesterday I got up and vacuumed the floors before our house inspection, which we passed. A team of visiting medical people aiming to establish a similar facility in Mildura viewed our house (and us). Brent and Margo answered questions.

We had community projects in the morning, and since it was drizzling I couldn't continue poisoning. Steve and I added capillary drips to the grey-water hoses up in the back corner of the community. It was wet but easy. We drank coffee until knock-off.

After lunch we had 'group.' I'm in the Entry Programme where I'll stay for four weeks. The counsellor, Kerry, asked me to begin the session by introducing myself and explaining how I got here. I spoke of Scott's overdose and my alcoholism. This was a very stressful speech, particularly as I don't know anyone. Still, I survived the panic attack and got it done.

The group was/is rather large. From my left: Charlie, Bearded Steve, Dave, Wayne, Tye, Mick, Carol, Kerry, and me. The session was constructive and generated a lot of very honest self-assessments and feedback. I spoke of my fears of isolating myself from

friends, particularly those that use and drink. Bearded Steve spoke from the heart and moved us all. I look forward to more of these sessions! (Carol has lived in 48 places in the last 6 years. I've only lived in about 30.)

After group I went up to the Workshop to do drawing. I hated all this—there was no paper, pens, pencils or anything. I had to borrow a pencil from Brent. Apparently, we have to buy our own stuff. Next time I'll stay behind and use the computers. Nevertheless, I did have a good seat out back of the workshop where I watched the never-ending rain and stared out over the meadows, cows, and ponds. We had 9 mm of rain according to the Channel 10 news.

Today we're off to town or Glenelg as a part of our monthly recreation day programme. It's also Melbourne Cup day. I'm going to town.

'Why do I drink?' That is the question. I had been thinking it was escapism until Dick [a reformed alcoholic and counsellor] suggested otherwise. (I'm not convinced it wasn't escapist...) I then began exploring the notion of self-hatred and self-punishment. I drink to hurt myself, etc. So far I think it is both self-hatred and a method of escaping the pain of life and memory. Something else occurred to me... That is, that I've suffered a kind of metaphysical death in recent years, whereby I find it hard to see a future or even dream and hope. I really have to find something to believe in out there...

Not only, then, do I want to be reintroduced to the 'real' me while here, the stunted child who was pickled in a bottle, but also find a way back into life. It is little wonder I dawdle about dressed totally in black—I'm in permanent mourning, like I'm at a funeral every single day. I need to escape the cemetery and find life!

The question is—is there anything worth living for? After all, and this came out yesterday in group, things may never change. Things may be fucked up forever...

It's now about 7.30 am. Universal Prince was just scratched from the Melbourne Cup. Like me really, the prince is lame!

Things to do while in town:

- Don't drink
- Go to markets
- Go to library to research Egyptian symbols

- Go to library to research tattoos
- Prices on clock-radios
- Go to DSS [Department of Social Security]

7/11/01

Wednesday

As both buses went to Glenelg yesterday, I decided to stay at the beach rather than tram it to the city. It was surprisingly hot and sunny. I walked the old walks Bubby and I used to take when living on Colley Terrace in our squat. I felt home and yet phantom-like, as if I were an invisible entity revisiting my lost life. Things, of course, have changed...

Bob lost it yesterday after a fight with his girlfriend and went and got pissed at the Jetty Road pub. This unsettled us all: the fragility of resolve, the weakness of self, and the paper-thin divide between each and every last one of us and illness. Alcohol is a patient and cunning foe, ever-lurking, ever-praised, and prominent in every facet of life. It's like God really. It will be there when all else has gone...

I checked my emails yesterday at the Glenelg library. Unfortunately, no word from Rebecca Goldie who was due back in Adelaide yesterday. I hope she's alright. I think of her often for some reason. Even though I scarcely know her, she reminds me of me. I think she pines over similar fears and issues, has a similar suspicion and distrust of people, and feels lost and misunderstood (I think). No doubt I am wrong about these things and she despises me. Whatever... Singularity is probably the best survival strategy anyway. FTW!

Also, emailed Rob [my former flatmate] three weeks ago about my plans to go to Kuitpo. He hasn't replied either!

Isolation and loneliness must be one of the biggest killers of humans.

Bearded Steve and Carol both gave their Action Plans yesterday at morning meeting. Looks like a terrifying experience. I'll have to give one of these plans after four weeks. Fuck that.

I wonder if Bob is on a bender.

Never forget how awful you feel at the end of a bender—the guilt, anxiety, and panic.

The hatred, the sweat, the tears, the poverty, the inner death. Each drink is effectively another death, another self-inflicted death. And yet...

Yesterday I felt like a drink.

How absurd is that?!

8/11/01

Thursday

7.00 am

After morning meeting yesterday we were all urine tested, which made for a large procession of patients into and out of the main office. The tests were a result of Bob's 'choices' at the pub.

I saw the doctor at 10 am. She sounds Canadian. She was very complimentary of me and my supposed courage, and spoke of the difficulties of educated people entering rehab. She's given me the choice of whether I want antidepressants or not and also wrote out a sickness certificate until mid-January. I liked her, but couldn't fix her pen.

After the doctor, Kate drove me up to the workshop where I sprayed weeds for 45 minutes until she came and drove me back. Kate's a rather wild chick—shaved head, tattoos, outspoken, tough, with a build many men would die for. She's also very funny. She lives in cabin 5 with Nick—one of the Blackwood crew I used to hang with years ago. He's a good guy too.

At 2 pm yesterday I had my first counselling session with Jenny, who is new to Kuitpo this week. Jenny attempted to gain an overview of my background to establish a context in which to analyse and help me. It didn't take her long. Basic questions on family, finances, debts, support networks, etc, soon established a rather desolate picture. Questions on attitudes and aspirations soon established an equally desolate picture. She has plenty to work with and knows it. I liked her and look forward to the challenge.

After this 50 minute session I bludged around. I went down and watched Tye and Charlie building a fence at Carol's place. I pushed young Cain on the swing while Carol made coffee for the guys. Cain's a cool kid.

At 3.30 I went to the 'optional' Introduction to the 12 Steps with Dick, an Irishman.

Also in attendance (from left): Mark, Bearded Steve, Margo, Dick, Charlie, and me. We looked at Steps 4 and 5 and Charlie and I had to read excerpts from *The Big Book*. I liked Dick's style.

Margo got permission to enter the Family Programme in two weeks, which means she'll move into cabin 2 with her boys. Brent made hotdogs last night. I also helped Steve W in the veggie patch ahead of some planting him and I plan to do today after shopping.

The cricket starts today at 10 am: Australia vs. NZ. Brent's going to miss shopping to watch the first session. Besides, he's going for a week's leave tomorrow. It'll just be Margo and me.

Two new people arrived yesterday—a girl, who moved into 6, and a guy, who moved into 4. Haven't met them yet.

Out and over...

9/11/01

Friday

It's been ten days now since I arrived at Kuitpo and about twenty days since I had my last beer. It's funny how ridiculously short that period is, and yet, oddly, it feels like months and bloody months—a lifetime.

Yesterday morning we went to Mt Barker for shopping, so I scurried up to Wil and Gret's to check on Bubby [where my dog was staying]. She was fantastic which made my day. Lex was there house-sitting and said he'd upped her medication because of recent seizures. I plan to visit Bubby every week while here [on shopping days], which is a Godsend!

After shopping Steve W and I planted our new seedlings, including tarragon, peppers, celery, and chillies. The veggie patch is looking great. The earth is rich and dark with full sun.

The cricket! Australia was 0/224 but managed to lose 6 wickets in the last session to collapse to 6/294! Un-fucking-believable...

Brent and I watched the final of the Australian Supermodel Search, but other than

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that, it was a dull evening. I went to bed early and drifted into sleep through sheer boredom. I did, however, stress over *The Ridiculous Madman* [a novel I had been working on]. When will I get back to it? Can I get back to it? Do I remember Jack? I need to get back there somehow ... but how? I have plenty of time to work on this project and yet can't seem to be fucked. I also can't seem to read anymore. Let's face it, in the last year I've read one book and didn't finish that. Either my brain is dead or alcohol has killed my natural interest. I'll have to re-read the *Madman* and see what I think. Hopefully something.

Brent leaves today on a week's leave. I'm gonna miss him. He's a very funny, generous, and caring man. Brent makes others feel comfortable – like Bearded Steve, who came for a visit yesterday for the first time to watch the cricket.

A beautiful morning outside: clear, blue and still.

10/11/01

Saturday

(Rare date: turn it upside down and it reads the same. Apparently 20 years since such a date has occurred.)

Saturday morning before 8 am. Strange to be up when previously I'd just be going to bed, or passed out, or drunk and speeding... Unfortunately, I've been imagining Claire a lot lately... Then again, when haven't I? God, I wish I could kiss and hold that woman again. As with the alcohol and drugs, I have to give up my addiction—and obsession—to Claire. She'd kill me in the end anyway.

As for yesterday: Lorette, Marty, and I weeded the strawberry patch behind cabin 5. It was good fun. Marty's a friendly guy and Lorette's sexily vibrant and almost childlike in her insanity. I like her. She's fun, she's cute, she's playful, and artistic... We also made a compost heap in the veggie patch.

Australia recovered in a rain-interrupted day at the Gabba to be 8 for over 400. The Kiwis are in trouble! Richard caught me watching cricket yesterday when I was supposed to be in the computer room. I'll have to watch out in future. Imagine getting

kicked out for watching cricket. It'd be un-Australian!

While in the computer room I made a poster for Brent's door: 'Brent: Fisherman. Enter if you dare!' It looks good and should amuse him when he returns.

And yes, I almost forgot, Margo's mothering instincts have extended further and she's adopted a baby cocky she found on the side of the road. Cool bird. She fed it oats. I gave it lettuce. It stands on the balcony and practices flapping its wings. People no longer terrify it. It sleeps in Margo's room in a drawer and it goes by the name of Cookie.

I also had a workout yesterday, which I've been doing since arrival. It's good to get physical.

Steve W and I are going to pull up the carrots and spring onions today and plant more capsicums. Other than that I'm planning to watch cricket.

It's a very quiet and chilly morning outside, the heater is on, and the new day begins...

When I saw Lex at Wil and Gret's the other day I told him I thought Rebecca's email was rather cold and detached. He said to remember her capricious nature... and that he believed she'd be dying to see me. I don't know. I hope he's right. I suspect she'll get back with Troy – the maniac! What a wretched world. Remember when I wined and dined her and she said I was the only guy that had ever cooked her a meal and read her poetry, etc. (Yuck, Yuck, Yuck!!) Funny how such overtly romantic displays are usurped by brutal displays of violence and aggression by the likes of the Troys of this world. How fucked! She'll always run to the likes of him and recoil from the likes of me, even if she says she yearns for the likes of me. Never mind. Perhaps she's not meant for me. It was a nice idea I guess, nothing more.

Savage indignation.

It's rather pathetic how much emphasis I place on women and the sanctity of women as a means of finding salvation. The reality is that I'm terrified of women, beginning with my Mother, for abandoning me. I wonder if I can purge myself of this fear. Perhaps this legacy will consume me forever. I hope not.

Oh, but to kiss and hold Claire again.

11/11/01

Sunday: Remembrance Day

Madman writes:

Dear God,

Either you are insane, bipolar, or simply depraved. Then again, maybe you suffer from all three dispositions equally. Looking at the world one seriously has to question the methods of your world construction. Every aspect of this project fails to meet the most basic safety considerations. Take the people, who seem hell-bent on destroying themselves and every other creature on the planet, such as those glowing in the deep dense waters, or those buried deep in the hot volcanic earth, and especially those tiptoeing the earth's surface in frantic anticipation. Then there are the poor trees, strapped to the earth by their feet, prisoners to the axe in the neck, the chainsaw to the face, desolate pastures and sandless shores. This is your masterpiece, dear Lord, the most fantastic of failures, far outreaching any example ever created by humans. Again I have assessed your work and found it catastrophic.

Your guide and friend,

Jack Diggins

That was fun!! The first words from Jack in a very long while. Welcome home, Jack. I'll have to read all my notes and reassess where the chronicles of Jack Diggins are at.

It rained most of yesterday, most of the night, and is still raining now at 8.37 am. Did fuck-all yesterday. I did attempt to watch cricket, but most of the day's play was lost to rain. So, instead, I attempted to design neck tattoos using the 'savage indignation' motif.

Election Day was a tragedy for the nation. The Liberals enjoyed an easy victory with their xenophobic and racist fear-mongering. A country of immigrants hates immigrants.

What to do Sunday?

Lorette just came over with Tiyana (Carol's young daughter). They're off to church. Lorette is hoping to get into Art School soon and has been taking black and white photos for her portfolio. She's good fun. Apparently she's been here for nine weeks and had no

visitors – hence the church meetings, where she gets out for a while and can go to the shop. She has no visitors because she's from interstate, and because, by all reports, she's a regular pilgrim... The world needs more like her.

Bearded Steve also went to church—for the first time, I believe. Wonder if he finds anything there. Good luck to him for looking.

Cookie the Cocky died today and I dug a hole for his grave behind the veggie patch. Margo just needs to give him up...

12/11/01

Monday

Did very little yesterday. Watched the cricket until rained out. Watched the Socceros play the French. Helped Margo and her son, Isaac, bury Cookie the Cocky up behind the veggie patch. Resisted watching TV about the Liberals' election victory.

Missing Bubby! Missing Claire! Missing life! Missing, missing, missing, missing, missing...

A grey day beckons. 8 am.

Wonder what Rebecca Goldie's doing?

13/11/01

Tuesday

Due to a very sporting declaration by Steve Waugh, Australia came dangerously close to losing the first Test last night. At the end of play, Australia was only 10 runs ahead.

It rained almost all day yesterday, which meant that we did workshop instead of community projects. I continued designing my neck tattoo, which was fun. I believe it's about ready.

There's a book with no name on our bookshelf. I opened it and was delighted to find that it was a collection of works by W. Somerset Maugham, published in 1933. I read the introduction and was even more delighted to happen upon this quotation:

... Maugham's sourest and most famous contribution to the moral life of our century is probably his diagnosis of love itself as above all, humiliation. Love in Maugham is either a helpless, unconditional surrender to instinct, an undignified collapse of all our best intentions; or it is a quest for disgrace, an infatuation with a creature we cannot respect and who will bring us only confused and ignoble pain ... love as masochism (p. 10).

Which of the above best describes my love and obsession for Claire? I truly believe it is all three—it is helpless surrender to instinct; it is a loss of my best and most gracious intentions; and it is a form of disgrace, confusion, and masochism...

It really is quite agonising here. I've been so fond of the surrounding tranquillity that I hadn't really wanted to accept the chronic pain that I'm going through, what I suspect we are all going through.

And yet, and yet, ever spiteful creature of self, since I've been here I've achieved some very fine and disturbing things: I've burrowed inward and resurfaced; I've begun writing again, both this journal and the *Madman*; I haven't had a drink; I've had my dead tooth drilled and can once again eat; I've felt safe and secure and in good company; and I've begun drawing and designing, exercising and thinking, alas, back temporarily with the living! I hope I can sustain this more productive and vibrant self and not murder him. As I think both Kev and I admitted last night, the bottle will eventually return, it's only a matter of when. Sad but true.

I have counselling at 11 am today.

I seem to juggle the faces of women like delusions, and I attribute to these faces the most alarming contexts, some gruesome, some fantastic... Claire, Rebecca, even Lorette, all seem to be a part of this lavish fantasy.

We watched a film in group yesterday on panic. I closed my eyes and imagined a world without panic.

Certificate of Achievement

KUITPO COMMUNITY

This certificate is presented to

Andy

in recognition of outstanding accomplishments and contributions.

Signature

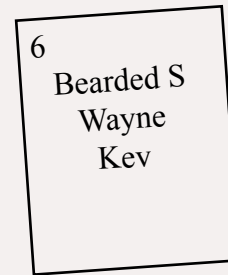
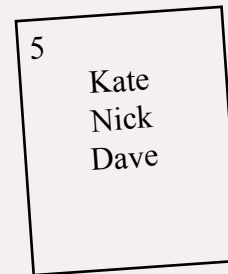
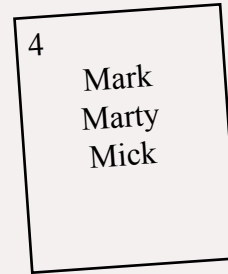
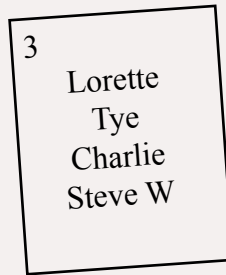
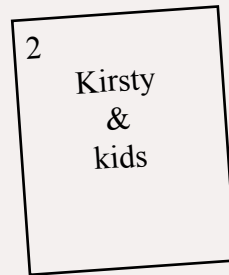
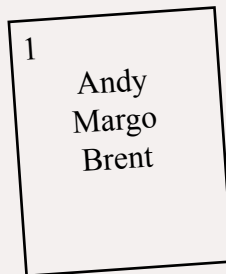
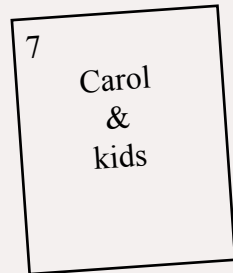
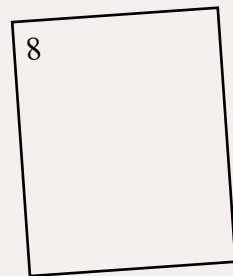
JL Cruise

12/11/01



14/11/01
Wednesday

I've been here for two weeks now. Seems so much longer. The eternal fortnight of reckoning, of addiction evasion, hoping for a clearer future. They say it all speeds up from here and the weeks fly by. Well, time will tell. We lost Sherrie yesterday from cabin 6, which leaves the place with several openings. Current occupancy:



A very full day yesterday. First, at meeting, we heard Mick and Tye's Action Plans. Those guys performed well and got good feedback. I didn't say a thing. I didn't know what to say or what to offer. Next week I'll try to offer feedback and get more involved. Steve W then had to award the Kuitpo 'Patsy' award ['pat-on-the-back' award] to anyone he liked, usually for some contribution to the community, and usually to someone who's been here for some time. He gave it to me! Why? He said it was for fitting in immediately and for making friends and, of course, for helping him in the garden. It was embarrassing, but nice. I made an awkward speech and promptly blushed. I have to give the award to someone next week. Contenders? Bearded Steve for courage; Carol for community impact; Margo for sheer involvement; Lorette for diversity and involvement; Brent for being an all round nice guy!

After meeting we had a seminar on Social Security payments. I asked about my 'breach' [where the Department of Social Security reduced my welfare payments for not 'actively' seeking work] and then, after the seminar, was helped by the guy to appeal my breach. Fingers crossed it goes well. Good guy, very helpful.

Next... Supposed to have a counselling session but it never eventuated. Now it's today at 1.30 pm.

Also had to enrol in a course. Most are doing basic computers or Math and spelling, etc. I chose creative writing. This will mean sitting in a classroom for three hours one afternoon a week. Back to school for Andy.

Next... Spoke to Lorette. She's going away this weekend to Victor Harbor. She said I looked nice. I said she looked nice. She's very funny, very buoyant, and very determined despite her vulnerability. She's turned her focus onto art in all its guises and wants to meet up with an old self; an old self once successful in clothing design and other such ventures.

Next... Went to the Willunga library with Tye, Marty, Mick, Carol, and Kirsty. Kerry drove. Checked my email... No-one had written me! Talk about sending emails into the void. I sent another email to Rebecca and another to Rob. Perhaps they'll respond through sheer guilt ... or even frustration. Rebecca may just tell me to fuck off.

Next... back at camp and those returning from the library, plus Bearded Steve and Wayne, went to cabin 3 for a seminar on 'Towards Independence' run by the Salvos. In essence: Towards Independence is a three-step programme for homeless people. Robert

[from the Salvos] seemed nice and genuine. May seriously consider this option. It provides another six months of safety and counselling after rehab.

It occurs to me that Somerset Maugham is onto something in 'Love as Masochism.' My love—infatuation—obsession—with Claire has always been a form of self-torture. When will I stop this assault on myself and move on. It's not *Claire* that now ensnares me (with her charms and the like), but *me!* I hang on to this fantastic and improbable hope of one day winning her back and living happily ever after. What a fucking joke. Claire must die in my mind. Love, true romantic love, surely must exist somewhere, but *not* where I look for it. Looking for love in Claire is like looking for fire in the Antarctic—not fucking likely. Odd how I turned away those that may well have loved me, like Simone and Janine... I really must remain an enigma to those two.

Looks like being a nice spring day today. Birds are darting in and out of the red bottlebrush outside our sliding door, and the cows are mooing with some determination on the opposite hillside. I can hear numerous birds singing—only I don't know what sort they are.

Made a nice lasagne last night. Margo and I ate two serves each.

Today's Wednesday, an anything can happen day [Mickey Mouse Club saying].

Counselling: 1.30 pm

Dole form: Lodge today with sickness certificate

Tomorrow: Check on Bubby at Wil and Gret's

8.15 am and signing out...

15/11/01

Thursday: *Bubby Day*

Had a hideous dream that Bubby died. Then, in my dream-world dismay, I discovered that there was a cloned Bubby. This Bubby proceeded to divide, multiply, and metamorphose into a yeti-like creature that Lex and I had to fend off and kill. I'm glad the night's over.

Yesterday: workshop in the morning. I bludged and continued to read Somerset

Maugham's *The Mixture as Before*. Not bad, a little bleak and icy, but otherwise a fair enough perspective on life. I'll also read Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Lorette came over and we had a good chat and coffee and smokes in the sun on the balcony. It was nice. She showed me her diary which is a note pad, recipe book, sketch book, collage collection, storage facility, as well as being a bulging folio of letters, newspaper clippings, postcards, business cards, and photographs. It's a rather busy book for a busy person. She's having a dispute with Kuitpo staff over their refusal to allow her to return from weekend leave on Sunday evening rather than Monday morning. Solution: they're letting her stay at the Christies Beach Graduate House on Sunday night. It's all rather ridiculous. Lorette is at bursting point. Best leave her be!

Afternoon: community projects. I continued poisoning weeds. I also had counselling with Jenny. This was an odd experience. It's not so much about neurosis as pragmatics: electricity and phone debts; future housing; support structures and safe relationships; and only indirectly about mental health. I dismissed most of the above and rabbitted on about Claire and the impossibility of romantic love (provoked by Maugham) and love as the ultimate masochistic and humiliating act. Affronted, she suggested that I don't dismiss love, and be prepared to one day chance my arm. Perhaps I will. I told her I have no control over my thoughts and that, basically, I couldn't get Claire out of my head... It's a rather dull and tired story, one I've needlessly told anyone who would listen. Anyway...

It's a fantastic day outside. The grass is dew-covered and the air is still and the sky is pale blue. The sun is beginning to have its way. And the birds are singing.

16/11/01

Friday

Despite my terrifying dream some nights ago, Bubby was fine. Like me, she seemed genuinely taken aback and relieved to see me. Her tail wagged the entire time I was there. She was looking healthy too. I guess it's another week until I see her again.

Shopping day was warm but fun. I bought a cheap shirt from the Goodwill, tailor-made cigarettes, an ice coffee, and a chicken pie. Thursday's definitely the best day of

30



the week.

Did my shopping and spent \$65.00. That's the most I've spent on groceries ever. Still, whilst I do have some food, I hardly have anything gourmet. Going to struggle next week, however, since I'll only have \$50 for food and cigarettes. Ouch!

Also had 'relaxation' yesterday with Brenda [our meditation instructor]. Everyone had a good sleep.

Rather depressed last night, more feelings of futility, that no matter what I say or do, I'm doomed. That each hour I'll be in envy of just about every other creature on the planet, worms and bats included, and spite-ridden as a result. That I will never escape the isolation and loneliness I endure. A permanent vagabond.

I thought of Stacey yesterday [a girl I knew at university]. It's funny how she surfaces in my mind like a sweetly forgotten dream, rising up and out, taking shape, until I once would have been good together. Such is life. She's escaped my riptide and drifted onto other shores. I hope I see her again, for she was the most beautiful woman in the world. And then there is Claire, dark, mysterious, brutal Claire, offspring of Icharus, skin of gold, eyes of poison. And... Whatever.

Margo is going away today for the weekend with her boys, to West Beach where they'll stay in a caravan. The forecast is for 31 degrees. Half the community is on day leave. It'll be a lonely old place for the remaining inmates.

Brent is due to return this evening after a week in the Riverland at Loxton. He'll bring a splash of joy to everyone tonight. He's a well-liked bloke.
7.58 am, and out.

17/11/01

Saturday

Finished *The Mixture as Before* yesterday and look forward to reading more Somerset Maugham. Started Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* but had to put it off to a new day. Moocows mooing and parental abandonment seemed a bit much for a sleepy mind. I'll try again later.

Yesterday: most of the community went on day-leave, which left a few sorry sods to keep the cogs turning. Richard took me up to the workshop with the poison and spray gun where I took on a guerrilla war with enormous spiked weeds, Salvation Jane, and other armoured plants. Being so warm and sunny, I was worried about the fangs of snakes piercing my ankles and legs, wading as I was through thick thorny growth. Still, I do enjoy killing these wicked weeds. Sexy Kate came and picked me up after I finished, and for the rest of the day I read, smoked, and ate. All this eating and working out should make for some dramatic physical improvements. I was a touch over 12 stone when I arrived here, perhaps now, two-and-a-half weeks later, I'm a fraction more.

Lorette left yesterday for the weekend. I met her sister and brother-in-law, Bill, who recently fractured his skull and can't work, drive, or drink. Poor bastard.

Then Brent returned, having had a bad time during his week's leave. He fell out with his sister and had to rent a caravan. Temptation almost seized him but he escaped its clutches. He has a month to go now and looks forward to leaving.

I may go for a walk today, but who knows...

I still haven't spoken to anyone on the outside other than when I came across Lex at Wil and Gret's. Should ring Laura, Troy R and Hippy, Bret, Dave, and that's about it. I could ring Rebecca Goldie at her mum's, but fuck that. She'd probably be distant and send me mad. If she emails me then perhaps I'll call her. She still hasn't responded to my last two emails, and when she has responded in the past she's hardly been informative or intimate... This, knowing that she rings that Troy thug she used to go out with, who she told me she wanted to escape. Women! Perhaps I need to be more vicious and cruel to impress her... It's an absurd world. Perhaps madness is the only genuine response to life. Romanticism simply doesn't work.

9.25 am.

11.25 pm

This may be a sanctuary of sorts, a drug- and alcohol-free environment with the necessary domestic facilities to sustain physical health, but it's no haven. One has no escape from the terror of memory and thought; the terror is lived and breathed from

one painful moment to the next, with no reprieve. We are in a new kind of hell, a lucid, moment by moment kind of hell, a ceaseless hell. Damn the world that bore this hell!

18/11/01

Sunday

The war continues. Speculation about Bin Laden's whereabouts continues. The bombs keep bombing.

It rained heavily for most of yesterday. I had a workout and then watched TV all day, eating sporadically. Brent and I had chicken schnitzels for dinner, with tomato and cheese sauce, mashed potato, and steamed carrots. It was excellent.

I'm thinking of going hiking today—then again, it's raining outside. Perhaps in the afternoon it will clear.

Only read about 25 pages of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I'm warming to it. There's a black and white photo of Joyce on the cover, aged 22. He looks oddly defiant and yet resigned and apathetic, as if he's shrugging his shoulders at life. I look forward to reading *Ulysses*.

Perhaps living the terror from moment to moment is a good thing, a cathartic experience, allaying the tension and horror of life, not building it up. It's hard to know what's best. Is it better to be permanently distressed and on the verge of a breakdown, simply waiting for the brain to implode? Or is it better to drink and use? To escape any way possible? (Looking for excuses are we?)

I still haven't read all my material on the *Madman*. Must do that this week. Also, I have to choose someone for the 'Patsy' award on Tuesday. Still think I'll give it to Bearded Steve for showing courage.

May see the doctor on Tuesday and accept the offer of antidepressants. Couldn't hurt, I guess.

'Are we having fun yet?' I once yelled, tripping and delirious, at Claire. She was talking to another guy. I then staggered outside, beer in hand, cigarette in mouth, and circled around on the driveway, staring dizzily into the starry night. If I could return to that time

in my life, could I change things so Claire would love me? Did she love me ever? I doubt it. I think she was fond of me, at first amused and distracted, but never in love. Now she can't stand the sight of me. It's maddening. Does she detest my love or just fear it? Who does she love? It's so tedious and banal, but I really think I could have loved her for the rest of my life. Why is it we can't control our own brains? Why can't I undo or stop the feelings I have for her? Why can't I? This is ludicrous. How many more years will I harbour this fantastic and misguided love for someone who detests me? Am I punishing myself? Am I perpetuating this love to derange my brain? Am I trying to justify my own antisocial and self-destructive behaviour? We are truly ridiculous creatures!

10.10 am

How did I get here, to Kuitpo, to despair, to this moment on a night where a meteor shower is soon to begin, here, so far away from where I came from, from Claire, from BJ, from family, from home...?

The impossible homecoming [Iain Chambers].

11.30 pm.

19/11/01

Monday

Despite writing the date every day in this journal, I still never remember where exactly I am. The days blur from one to the other, afternoons hijacked by dreary lulls, evenings by loneliness and despair, and the nights by dangerous and damning dreams. How many years have elapsed now? When will my beard touch the sand? And still only two-and-a-half weeks have past. It's awful.

Now up to page 80 in *A Portrait*. Beginning to enjoy the read and look forward to more. Joyce still looks strangely out from the cover, somewhat alien-like, slouching slightly, head cocked, hands deeply sunk in his pockets.

Slept most of yesterday afternoon before dinner. Brent went to Mark's to eat cod from the dam. I refused.

Watched most of *A Thin Red Line* before calling it a day. Quite a troubling film.

Still haven't rung anyone to say hello. Will soon, I guess. Wonder if Rob and Rebecca have emailed me? I doubt it. Rebecca's probably back with thug-Troy and Rob will be enjoying his travels through Southeast Asia, if someone hasn't killed him.

5.27 pm

We've just lost Charlie! About 15 minutes ago I got back from the gym to discover Charlie had tested positive to drugs and Dick was taking him away. What a blow, a cruel and alarming blow. Charlie, so it goes, had a headache tablet and tested positive for codeine. Just today at group he spoke at length about his hopelessness and fears for the future, but that he really wanted to make a fist of things for the sake of his young daughter, Cindy. I really like Charlie; he's a sensitive, thoughtful, humorous, and seriously dislocated guy. He and I have spoken about our predicaments and our hopes to find *hope!* He'll be left for dead at the nearest bus stop. I hope he doesn't die. A bender looms. He's homeless, he's desperate, he's scared, he's lost, and now he's failed in something he needed so much—hope and safety. I gave him a hug and saw in his eyes the surfacing magnitude of his exile. I told him to get back here in a month when his suspension ceases, and he said, with tears, swallowing the burgeoning uncertainty, 'I'll try!' Try, Charlie, try! I could feel his confusion and sense of chaos and bewilderment. I trembled. My skin flushed with burning fear. I felt genuine terror. That dreadful feeling of the very real uncertainty behind everything—for the first time in weeks—thumped at my chest. Charlie must feel doomed resignation, that he has lost, that his last chance has just dissolved with an ill-gotten headache tablet. My nerves are only now beginning to exhaust their stores of shock. *Breathe now, breathe...*

All up, it was a strange kind of day:

- Wet-area revamp; buried grey-water hose
- Chat with Marty
- Carol's oddly friendly behaviour towards me; she came to veggie patch to have a chat. How odd. I think she just wanted me to make a card for her on the computer to see off Kirsty. That'd be right!

- Also made a farewell card for Kev
- Kev and Kirsty leave tomorrow
- Workout
- Read Joyce
- Tired all day
- Shattered...
- Group: I said I needed a psychiatrist and that counselling wasn't enough for me – I needed more serious mental help. Kerry will look into it.
- Help!
- Dave was hilariously honest in group. He said, 'If you don't laugh you'll cry.' He's an insightful guy.

20/11/01

Tuesday

Awful night's sleep. Restless and startled, turning from one shoulder to the next, with no possibility of escape. I hope Charlie survived the night. I thought of him with his bag of clothes wandering about the streets of Adelaide, assessing things as he prowled, waiting to get on, furious at his most recent demise, deflated. I hope he lived a different imagining than this.

The last week has been a labour. I've felt languid and speechless, as if I'm cringing away from these troubled people and this troubled place. I'm withdrawing perhaps closer to the core of my being, perhaps into the heart of things. I can only hope that by withdrawing and evading others, I am rounding the corner and drawing closer to self. Will I find a scared and startled child, kneeling in the shadows, fingertips like spiders' legs reaching, in the depths of a labyrinth? A scarcely formed beast with a giant swollen skull? A four-year-old child howling for his mum? The cry of the damned still wet on his bloodless lips? The real me, the inner broken self, is bound to be a stunted alien, a mass of limbs and bones grovelling hopelessly on the floor, in the shadows, out of sight and beyond.

Carol picked up on this withdrawing me and said I was way off colour yesterday. She

said she could barely understand or hear me. I was mumbling. She told me not to fear when she visited—get that! It's true though, my defences had risen and I wondered why she was calling for me, waiting for me. But it wasn't 'me' that came to greet her – it was a frightened and suspicious child. 'What do you want?' was my immediate question. To see me, she said. I didn't believe her. I couldn't believe her. Carol isn't like that: she's loud, caustic, rash, impulsive, selfish, manipulative, and yet, like Circe [a character in *The Ridiculous Madman*], she has those dark, dazzling, and addictive eyes.

Nevertheless, by mid-afternoon, her brief attempts at contact had faded, and she was back to the brazen and icy princess we all know. Yet the men here flock to her, they cook for her, linger about her, surround her, and do almost anything she asks. I never visit her. I long to, but resist. She represents everything dangerous to me, those eyes reminiscent of Claire's, that god-awful feeling within me to arch forward and breathe her breaths and lick her ear, to yield to her. Then I would be like them, blind slaves to beauty, eyes averted from the self I must now face, and lost within another escapist reverie. I must resist this reverie or I'll miss my reflection as it passes through the mirror. I must resist her and that part of myself that wants to throw itself at her feet.

I saw Carol just then, cigarette hanging from her mouth, child hanging from her arm, taking her eldest daughter to the bus stop. She waved. I stopped. She said she had set her alarm for 6 am so she could go to the gym. Her plans were thwarted, she said, by Cain howling and carrying on, so, she said, fuck it all, the world's against me. It's a bizarre sight to watch such a sweet-looking girl swear so severely at the fresh morning. I left, rattled. This mixture of beauty and beast is an alluring blend.

Kev is here now. Brent and Margo are up. Kev leaves today.

8.23 am

21/11/01

Wednesday

Kev and Kirsty left the community yesterday. At the morning meeting we gave them feedback and encouragement and sent them on their way. Both looked relieved and even a little sad. Brent gave Kevin a table tennis bat.

ALCOHOL / DRUG FREE DECISIONBENEFITS OF NOT USING:

- Clarity of mind / purpose / agenda
- Platform off which to attempt to build a tolerable future.
- More money / food / time, etc
- Read more, think more, plan more.
- Take stock of the 'now' - analysis of situation.

UNPLEASANT EFFECTS OF USING:

- Anxiety problems. Unstable...
- Insecure. Sense of despair / terror.
- Sense of death / No future / emptiness.
- No money, home, security, future, direction, etc.
- Loss of self, of days + weeks, etc
- "The Ernest Hemingway" effect.

REASONS FOR ABSTAINING.

I will abstain because:

Reason 1: So that I can build a future that I can live with.

Reason 2: So that I can have more enriching + meaningful relationships (on all levels).

Reason 3: I want to survive beyond this summer. I want a more healthy future (body + mind).

Reason 4:

Reason 4:

Reason 5:

WHAT DO I HOPE TO ACHIEVE BY ABSTINENCE?

A happier, more productive
life.

I passed on the 'Patsy' award to Bearded Steve, and spoke a little about his quiet courage. Steve was shocked and embarrassed and refused to give a speech. Instead, he grinned madly and looked as uncomfortable as a man could look.

I have to give my Action Plan next Tuesday. It'll be good to get this performance out the way. I'm terrified already. The very idea of exposing myself—confessing—is off-putting. And yet, for morning seminar yesterday, Dick had all seventeen residents publically comment on why 'recovery' was important. Of course we all said it was important, but then the monologues became more curious, more bloody, more everything. Lorette broke down, a choking mess, and had to run from the hall. The order of speakers: Dick, Steve W, Marty, Mark, Lorette, Kev, Dave, Bearded Steve, Mick, Brent, Nick, new girl, me, Kate, Carol, Kirsty, Margo, and Wayne. (Tye was bed-ridden with a sore shoulder.)

There we sat, in the rec room, in a circle, eyes dodging eyes, spilling our liquid selves into the circle of comprehension. Each story as wild and deplorable as the last, echo upon echo of guilt and shame and despair, needles, overdoses, blackouts, crimes, losses, and renewed commitments, eighteen voices and several thousand reasons to drink and use, a symphony of desperate cries to the deep. I spoke of *Barfly* and my love for the film; of forks in the road; of turning right over left; and *Leaving Las Vegas* and death. The whole experience was moving and a little repulsive. Eighteen minds fighting against the battles waged against themselves—by themselves! Shared anecdotes seem to become shared experiences. And why not; in essence each story mirrored the last, only the places and characters and substances changed. The irksome details remained the same. Burdens were momentarily unleashed, eyes met eyes, and frowns met frowns, until thirty-six eyes stared solemnly forward, within and without at once, as this fantastic tapestry of horror unfolded. And then our common self divided, lingered, reflected and sighed. Another session was done. Honest voices had spoken.

'Those cries for help still ringing in our ears...' [Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*]
We all rested following this session. Whole lives had to be gathered back up, from the floors and dusty recesses, from wherever they had been flung.

I went to Lorette's. Here, Lorette, Margo, Carol, Mick, and I sat, talking small. Lorette took photos of our faces for a project she is doing for TAFE entry. We are to attach to our pictures responses to three words: 'Past, Present, Future.' I thought of

William Blake's Albion, who 'Past, present and future sees,' or something like that.

In study group I responded to 'Past' in a very [Janette] Turner-Hospital and Iain Chambers kind of way.

I also had counselling with Jenny. She asked if I felt okay. In her experience, day 3, week 3, and month 3 are flat spots in rehab programmes. Odd, because I've felt awful all this—*my third*—week. We also did a bit on why I want sobriety. I wrote my answers and discussed them as honestly as I could.

I had a urine test after counselling. It's the 5th I've had since rehab began. Quite humiliating, handing over a jar of piss to one of the girls to bag up and send to the lab.

Last night, Australia won the soccer World Cup qualifying match 1/0 against Uruguay. Brent and I watched and loved it. Great stuff. Huge crowd. Good fun. Go, Aussie, go!

Steve W came over and was furious. Cabin 3 is having problems despite Charlie's recent departure. Steve and Lorette are at each other's throats. Steve's had enough. Lorette's had enough. They'll have a meeting this morning.

22/11/01

Thursday: *Shopping Day*

'Man survives by his ability to forget,' said Richard Flanagan on Triple J yesterday (author of *Death of a River Guide*). It's a curious quotation given that I'm trying to overcome my own past.

Thursday: Bubby Day!!! The plump princess of my domestic world, the piglet of my heart, the wombat of my soul, the epileptic herself, Bubby! I can't wait to see her. I hope she's okay.

Cabin 3 had their meeting yesterday morning and a truce called. Margo, Carol and I began cleaning cabin 2 for Margo to move into today. Alas, we have a new resident.

Owen, 23, arrived yesterday [nickname: OJ]. He's only been in Adelaide a week, having escaped Melbourne especially for the Kuitpo experience (otherwise he had a 12 month wait for Melbourne programmes). He's pleasant enough, comical, talkative,

Andy: 31 yrs

“...the Bard! / Who Present, Past, & Future Sees” (William Blake).

The past is never settled. Mirage-like, it shimmers and pulsates on the edges of consciousness, in the disputed territories, often illuminating but usually startling; at other times it recedes and dissipates as fog on a sunny morning, hidden but in waiting.

Example: Two people witness to the same event, weeks or years ago, seldom recall the same picture. Sometimes their recollections are oddly dissimilar, with differences so conflicting that one wonders whether they were actually present at the same event. At other times only the colours and shades differ, like Monet's impressionist sunrise set against the vibrant chaos of Van Gough's equivalent. Both representations are alike only in essence, not kind.

Such is the ever-changing nature of my own past and the memory surrounding it. In dispute, it lingers and taunts at the periphery, beckoning the traveller but seldom yielding its secrets.

In all memory there is an element of the 'actual' transmuted, a series of fictions written over the fabrications that were once erected to contain it. Never settled, it shimmers on a horizon that is both before and behind us, within and without us, to the left and to the right, in all directions.

Alas, my past is yet to be invented... It remains ahead, behind and beyond, elusively magical and disturbingly surreal. But it is me.

friendly, and should fit in. He loves tattoos and plans to cover himself in them, particularly those portraying carp, suns, and 8 balls. True! He's a Hawthorn supporter. Test cricket starts in Hobart today.

We had our community lunch yesterday and I made two pizzas.

After lunch Owen arrived. Later, I went to 'Intro to the 12 Steps' held by Dick in cabin 4 (Dick, Mark, Mick, Bearded Steve, Marty, Margo, Lorette, and me). Not bad. We spoke about Step 6 and acknowledging personal defects. I spoke of public speaking—the most common fear—and the fear of humiliation. Dick read from *The Big Book*, particularly Step 1 and the idiotic cycle of alcohol abuse that only alcoholics truly comprehend. It's madness. Every week we say we'll quit, yet we don't. Knowledge about the danger of alcoholism does not stop the alcoholic drinking. Intelligence does not stop the alcoholic drinking. The only way to stop drinking, Dick says, is to complete the 12 Steps. He's a good man is Dick, and realistic. He knows most of us will use again [only 1 in every 100 stay clean and sober after leaving Kuitpo], and that many of us will die in the process. It's *that* real. Alcoholism is a very real and very dangerous disease. It has already begun to kill most of us here; the question is whether we will allow it to finish us off. I hope not...

The strangest thing... Yesterday I went to the computer room to type up my response to 'Past, Present, Future' for Lorette. I was at computer 1, Kate at computer 2, Nick at computer 3. Kate suddenly says: 'We have 3 ex-Blackwood High students all in a row.' I knew Nick had been to Blackwood, but not Kate. I said that Blackwood High had obviously contributed a high class of individual to society—so many that they were choking the state's rehab programmes! We all laughed. But to think: Kate at Blackwood High! Mind you, she's only 25, so wasn't there when I was. Yet she walked the same halls. Had the same teachers. Bizarre.

What's more, Kate once lived on Grove Street, Eden Hills (number 8). Since I've lived at both no. 12 and no. 19 Grove St, that's fucking weird! 'Somewhere someone is travelling furiously toward you, at incredible speed, travelling day and night' ['At North Farm,' John Ashbery]—and I only met her yesterday! What a world.

Kate's parents were recently diagnosed with cancer, she said. Poor Kate. Her mum had a mastectomy and will survive. Dad has prostate cancer and will die. Poor Kate is

carrying some baggage. Stress, the doctor said, was one contributing factor to her dad's cancer—so Kate thinks she gave her dad cancer. Nice!

I asked Kate what she did to get here. She suffered from a chronic speed problem and was an alcoholic from a very early age. Remarkable. Such a beautiful and spunky woman struck by such addictions. I just want to kiss her. She has a very beautiful face despite her tough and hard appearance—the shaved head, muscular physique, and tattoos. If only God would deliver her unto my arms!

I thanked Kate for our talk and she reciprocated.

23/11/01

Friday

Saw Bubby and she was fine. I sat her up on my lap and gave her a good hug, and she made no effort to leave. She's a beautiful animal with a beautiful grin.

Shopping, and I only had \$20 for groceries. I bought bread, milk, cheese, eggs, and ham steaks. It won't be enough, but there we have it. Thankfully, I ran into Kate at the supermarket, and since Nick wasn't there we met up at the coffee shop and had a chat. She's great, people stare at her, and I love her. Men and women alike stare at her, shocked by her shaved head and boyish defiance, her tattoos, tank top, and pierced tongue, and yet they miss the fact that she's strikingly beautiful with legs to die for. We joked around. Kate's allergic to dairy products but still drank a 500ml Farmers Union ice coffee, saying it might make her hazy. She also suffers from asthma. She does aerobics every day, loves Diet Coke, pokes her tongue out at the world, but is also sensitive. Brent has never seen this side of her, nor has anyone else here (Nick has). Despite talking to Kate, I felt bad about it, as if I'd failed myself for not having the looks, gestures, and witticisms to seduce her. This is a flaw in my character—my blind rage and jealousy at all those men who could seduce her, which is one of my addiction 'triggers.'

We must, they say, *identify* and *avoid* our addiction 'triggers' if we are serious about drug- and alcohol-free lives. Claire, for instance, makes me want to get blind drunk. Remedy: don't think about her, don't watch her behind the bar, don't fantasise about her, and don't visit and talk to her. This is damaging behaviour which 'triggers' bouts



of incomprehensible drinking. They say we must avoid the people who have the power to *kill* us. Is Kate one of these people? If I'm going to seriously depress myself by not having her am I allowing her to damage me?

Nevertheless, Kate is a brash and lively angel and fascinating to watch. We also had relaxation yesterday and Brent and I watched the second Test in Hobart. Australia was 6/411 at stumps (Ponting is 92 n.o. on his home ground).

Damp morning outside, and dark.

Lorette showed us her photos yesterday. Must get copies for my journal.

Today I'll try to read more Joyce.

24/11/01

Saturday

I have a very serious disease, a disease that fools me into moments of false belief, of feigned health, and other delusions; and yet, by some incredible means, this disease brought me here, to Brent, Margo, and Kate.

Kate, the ever beautiful child of fear, whose very presence seduces and condemns me, must immediately be broken and dispelled before the mind's eye is blinded and rendered insensible. One moment with her is equal to days with the most splendid of others. There is in her a struggling new self, one born of the deranged and humiliated adolescent self-concept, which, now shed, struggles forth to find its own features and path. This time it doesn't want to be the slave to man, the battered and broken and abused child, meat to men, toy to boys. And I hope she rises from this old self and truly finds the passion and pleasures of the new self. If only she would let me love her!

Yes, Kate called on me yesterday and I made her coffee. She flicked through my tattoo magazine and picked out those she liked, asked me which I liked, and so it began. All the while I'm feeling her presence in space, her taut body and beautiful face, and dreaming lecherous dreams. And so we spoke, laughed, and revealed ourselves. Kate revealed her child-abuse. Kate was three years old again. The past is always in the 'now.'

And in this way they understood each other: Andy on parental suicide and childhood

abandonment; Kate on the neighbour's rapacious thirteen-year-old son and her mother's denials. Three- and four-years-old again, both branded for life with a pain they could not release. Both starved themselves, became skeletal, begged for death, but were saved. To endure a new burden, adopt a new guise. Where anorexia failed, alcoholism succeeded: both seduced by this foe. Both hadn't even met. Yet they lived on streets only minutes apart. Such is life. Kate continues on a path of self hatred and picks only those men who will abuse and torture her. And this is her life. Perhaps Andy does something similar. But alas, they stumble into each other at Kuitpo and they talk—they talk like they've never talked before, to each other, through shared memory, through love, the genuine quiet love of one broken person to another. He saw Kate and felt the spaces that were around her. He hopes she felt him too.

Will they ever share each other again? I hope they do. He prayed to God that they would. But perhaps their paths only intersect on that day, that moment, just for that fleeting gift. Does he expect too much? To seek to traverse the short space between them, to not only caress her mind, but her soul, and on getting to her soul, her body, his body, them together, two broken children made one?

Is he the most reckless of fools? Once again wracking his brain against an impenetrable divide? Hoping for resolutions that just can't be? Why would she love him anyway? He may slip clumsily through her fingers and to the floor, and with his liquid self he may then spill into the drain and flow away. But will she recognise him when she sees him, the gift he has for her, the incredible and most ludicrous desires that compel him? [John Ashbery, 'At North Farm']

Reality: She hasn't thought about him again! He just dreams his dreams because he can't stop dreaming...

24/11/01

Action Plan:

Why is Kuitpo Community suitable for you?

- ~~1. Kuitpo is not only drug and alcohol free, but it also provides an environment where I can explore those experiences and relationships that have long since drawn my destructive behaviour.~~
- ~~1. As a drug and alcohol free environment, Kuitpo offers the safety I need to begin to confront the reasons behind my destructive behaviour (and methods of containing it).~~
1. Being a drug and alcohol free facility, Kuitpo Community provides a safe and supportive environment for growth. I mean to take advantage of this.
2. Whilst at Kuitpo I would like to address the issues, experiences, and relationships that have long since driven my destructive behaviour, and in doing this begin to move away from these memories and that behaviour. By addressing the past I hope to create a happier, more functional future. I want as many years of happiness as I've had of pain.
3. Personal inventory of self: harm to others and to self. Continue the 12 Steps.
4. Begin to take responsibility for my future. Think more about where I want to be. Have something to aim for. Avoid/identify those things/people that have the power to kill me.
5. Address/explore issues of the past: Mother, Father, and Brother (death and loss).
6. Make contact with those friends outside who can help me, not shy away as I have done to date. In short, pick up the phone and dare to talk.

24/11/01

11.09 pm

(Me, Kate, Brent, Owen, Mick, Mark, Lorette)

Southern Lights

We stood under a blood-red sky
And felt big;
The fallen stood tall
As the wind and clouds rushed by,
Arms tingled with cold,
Faces averted from troubled lives,
Heavenward and beyond,
Stared and saw and felt alive,
Touched by a presence
More enormous than our own;
And we stood tall against
The immensity,
The moon with us, a bright
Spark against the flooding red of change,
And we stood together
And felt big.

25/11/01

Sunday

A darkling sky of shimmering reds still lingers in my mind. Beneath this splendour exists Kate, Andy, and others, pilgrims of life, faces upward pondering, and he wishes he could turn to her and tell her the things he has for her, but he fears she doesn't recognise him and therefore cannot receive them. And so they part, she to her room and her sleep, he to his house and a clumsy poem, but he cannot sleep, his heart beats loud, his mind races,

he dreams alarming dreams, of happiness, with her, today, tomorrow, and forever...

Yesterday, Brent and Owen and others went to the mines, so I worked on my Action Plan and watched the cricket. I did these things and thought of Kate. Then I had a workout and thought of Kate, my eyes glancing up at her cabin on the off chance of catching a glimpse of her. But no such apparition appeared, at least not in life, so I went to bed and slept. Again no actual images appeared. I rose, delirious, and bumbled out into the hall. The house was dark and *Fight Club* was playing. Faces in the television light. I thought I could make out Mick and Carol, so into the living room I stumbled to retrieve my journal. Here I am struck by a voice:

‘How are you, sleeping beauty?’

I turn, I reel, I speak: ‘Kate?’

And there she is, on the couch, not Carol, but Kate. I fumble for a coffee and quietly, sneakily, slip in beside her on the couch and then feel foolish. *Now what?* I watch the film. I smoke cigarette after cigarette, exhaling cloud after cloud of fear and anxiety.

Eventually, Kate and I begin to speak, despite the film, despite protocol. The irrepressible Owen interrupts with elaborate tales of drugs and delusions. He offers to pimp Kate at Kings Cross to feed their (to be acquired) heroin habit. He offers to hire me as his bodyguard. I say that this would never work, since I would kill him and save Kate. No-one detects how serious I was about this. We all speak of things. Kate and I share a domestic dream, we discover: both want to have a family and revel in domestic certainty and love.

God, I want to steal her away to another world where these things can happen. She says her parents had just visited her for lunch. She had told her mum about my short prose piece on ‘Past, Present, Future.’ I am touched—she had thought of me without me being there to remind her. Do I dare dream this means anything? Perhaps it’s just a flippant, throw-away accident.

When she leaves he savours the memory of her presence and the words that passed from her beautiful lips. But he is sad too. The things she utters are laden with pain and suffering. Men who have tied her up and abused her. Hostile and loving relationships. Kings Cross. Meaningless and abusive sexual flings. Drug cravings and car accidents. Psychiatrists and eating disorders. Suicidal tendencies and raves.

And he would like to have saved her, but he was suffering too. Perhaps the sense of

our journey, Iain Chambers writes, does not lie only in one direction, but behind us, in the rubble, misery and confusion we think we have already overcome.

Perhaps only in dreams can he hold her. He has an active imagination. He needs it, for nothing he really hopes for ever exists in the material world. He needs to live beyond the material in the vast expanses of the imagination. In this place he can kiss Kate goodnight and watch her wake. Her smile and wrap her arms around him and pull him in. Their first child and her tears of joy. His joy, a flood—a river—a tidal wave—of every hope he has ever flung into the riptide and never seen again. Here he takes her on picnics to exotic locations fit for fairies and elves. He lives a completely surrogate life through fiction. And what a fool is he! Such a ludicrous and fantastic dreamer. He must reconcile himself to the fact that she seldom thinks about him at all.

What a ridiculous madman he is!

Torrential rain outside. 10.26 am. The cricket has just come on the TV. Have to work on my Action Plan, particularly the section on goals. Cricket and Action Plan and Kate...

It's Kate's 26th birthday on Tuesday. This is also the day I have to give my Action Plan. Accident or fate? She leaves on Tuesday for a few days. He hopes and prays she returns. He wants to give her a birthday present—but what? That poem he wrote? A card? A gentle utterance? Silence?

Two days to decide...

12.51 pm

The inevitable has happened! My ability to hate myself has just reached new and colossal heights. My longing for the sanctuary of death is almost a spoken goal. I've just come from the gym where I tried to burn off the shameful horror I now so keenly feel. What a demented and ridiculous dreamer I must be. To have filled my mind with innumerable fantasies about Kate, to have felt her breath on my neck and her words in my ears, for what? To brutalise myself? That wretched tyrant of hope! Why hope when hope itself is simply another nail in the palm and knife to the guts? Why dream when to dream is to poison the mind and lay ruin its castle?

I sit again within the armchair that I have made my own. I feel comfortable and I

revel in dreamings of Kate. The boys ramble their ramble. Owen dribbles his idiotic drivel. I attempt to escape his burgeoning ego. I can't. Brent starts up on a secret, a secret about catching Carol and Tye in some sort of compromising sexual encounter. I attempt to ignore this lascivious rant. But I can't. The words, those debilitating and startling words, keep coming. They surround me. They impress upon my chest and make breathing a labour. I tremble. I curse and hate in silence. And they come. Tales about Kate. My sweet Kate.

Brent, once again, has bumbled into another intimate sexual moment. One pertaining to Kate and Nick *fucking* . I want to run. I want to dash my brains against a filthy rock. I want to surrender to life and gladly embrace my death. But I cannot do these things. I cannot escape my trembling carcass and frightful mind. I sit and tremble and hate myself for being me: a lonely, desperate, preposterous fool, prisoner to fiction and slave to romance. In a world of nothing!

Nothing!

26/11/01

Monday

Australia has just failed to qualify for the World Cup. Brent, OJ, Tye, and I were up before 5.30 am for kickoff. I've been working on my Action Plan as well. Kate didn't come over despite saying she would.

I slept yesterday afternoon but awoke suddenly to the sound of Kate's voice in the lounge room. Like a groggy fool, I staggered out to this melody. Here I found her and Brent laughing over Sexual Pursuit, the board game. I made coffee and sat down, immediately warmed by Kate's radiant smile and eye contact. She read my poem about the red night, and loved it. She asked for a copy so I gave her the original.

The horror of earlier in the day had left me. Now, instead, I felt a quiet and excited calm, simply hoping that one of the glances she gave me might turn into physical contact. Of course no such thing occurred. And was she really looking at me? Probably not! The tricks one plays on the mind, and for what? To build oneself up to a greater height for a more dramatic fall?

Whatever, Kate was here and I felt happy. If only she knew. But there, she doesn't need a man in her life. Her head is filled with abusive men, so my presence is hardly going to relieve her. Still, it would be nice to think that my presence could.

My preoccupation with Kate is beginning to alarm me.
I think I'm seriously fucking ill.

[So ends the first Kuitpo Diary...]



Madman.

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We are built from
layers of text, meaning,
& experience
...

To become reflective and reflexive about judgment is to realize that much of one's thinking takes place 'outside' the 'self' and within the symbolic order.

(Gregory L. Ulmer,
Heuretics,
1994, p. 180)

