

## Submarine

Heavy hang these chains of incarceration, supposedly.

I have been advised to forget. To abandon. A new beginning will now commence. Not in this cell. In quite another.

In this cell, you can hear the screams and jeers of the other prisoners. Screams from the poor souls that have not accepted their fate. Howling against the unjustness of it all. Jeers from the ones that welcome this lot, unable and unwilling to fit into the construct of society, they have always travelled this road, fought to stay on it, made sure they did not veer off course, ironically finding freedom in incarceration . Then there are those similar to me. Stoic, sarcastic, convinced that they have had enough of life to sustain them until their end, of which we are under no illusion is coming soon. It felt as if I was observing a microcosm of the whole tragicomedy of life which I could enjoy in relative peace, quiet and comfort.

No, no these fetters don't bother me at all. I actually admired how well designed they were, nothing wasted, everything with a function, everything with a purpose.

My new cell will be a submarine. Each submarine has just one sole occupant. When a prisoner is put into a submarine there has only been speculation as to the kind of tortures they will endure. How long the prisoner lives is irrelevant they say, do they finish the ration of food? How hungry does one have to be until they can refuse food no longer? Death by starvation can be euphoric but this is slow. Illness, disease, infection, these too can be slow but also unpleasant and painful. A heart attack they reckon is best, quick. In the end it's all immaterial. Once the door of the submarine closes, even before it is launched, the prisoner's life has ended and it does not matter how this end is reached.

The prisoner is wrapped in a fleece like material around their upper body and thighs, leaving the genital areas free for excretion. With measurements taken previously, the submarine is then moulded around their body. They are then fixed vertically in a crucifix

position with their legs slightly bent just over the knee to allow for shitting and pissing. With males, the penis is placed in a hollow to allow the urine to run off and a chute is placed in between their legs at an angle to allow excrement from the anus to run off. With females, the chute is placed in between their legs, also at an angle to allow urine and other discharge from the vagina and anus to run off. The prisoner's arms are bent at the elbows to ensure that, even as wastage of the body happens, the prisoner will never be able to manoeuvre free. The mould is also fitted relatively tight so that the prisoner will not be able to gather the force necessary to break their bones to free themselves that way. They are fed by a rotating disk that has a pre-programmed weight of food to ration. The food, made up of synthetic matter designed not to expire, is brought to the disk by way of contraption much like a primitive vending machine. The prisoner can eat as much as they want using their forehead to press a button that rotates the disk, once to bring the food, once more to take it away. The submarines are fitted with five metric tonnes of food, a figure worked out by the authorities to last roughly twenty five years. There is also a tube that provides water, fitted to the prisoner's dimensions so it will never be out of reach. Sea water is made in to fresh drinkable water by a filtration system built in to the submarine.

Turning their head left and right, tilting forward to press the button for food and sucking on the straw is the only movement for the prisoner. There are no lights on the submarines though studies have shown that the eyes will adjust to the darkness. Even so the prisoner's final view will be a dull wall.

The submarines are insulated in such a way, that it doesn't feel like it is moving almost as if the submarine had not been launched and that the prisoner might be granted a reprieve much like a mock execution but this is only another added torture. The submarines very much descend.

The prisoner is given a last meal of their choice this however contains an anaesthetic,

if they refuse to be anaesthetised this way another method is used. The prisoner wakes up in the submarine regardless.

No submarine is ever retrieved. After twenty five years both the prisoner's and submarine's records are deleted permanently left to float lifeless and silent in the deepest, darkest depths of the planets waters.

The surge of emotions that burst from me then gave way to a great apathy in the months since my sentence has now turned clinical and analytical, that could be said, is the primary trait of my personality, a re-set of such to my base emotional understanding of how I saw and measured the world, adding and subtracting the components so that I would come out on top, dominant.

I recall one of my earliest memories, perhaps at the age of four or five, I had a red jacket, one that fit tight and snug and when I wore it, I have no doubt I would have been described as cute, waddling about in that innocent and curious way young children do. I am huddled over on cold concrete, sheltered under this red jacket, the sun light brightening its navy interior, I held a teddy bear, as kicks and stamps gave me a shocking sensation I then understood to be physical pain. Older children, faceless and limbs had tried to take my bear, this object I had attached safety, home and fraternity to, but I held firm under the shelter of my red jacket. The next day having obtained matches, I returned to the children who sat in a circle. I lit a match, held it to the bear's foot which quickly caught fire then threw it into the circle. We all stared at the flaming bear, its joyful optimistic face still as it was swallowed by ravenous flame, one of the children started to cry, an adult rushed over screaming. I had taken what they thought was power from them, in how I can now recognise to have been a preternatural understanding of emotional mathematics and its value but more importantly how it could be manipulated and the cost of that power.

Digression aside, my adoration of anything designed with such technical brilliance as the

submarines, I imagine it to be relatively comparable to being slain by a worthy adversary, and maybe this acceptance is a mechanism of defence, a pre Stockholm syndrome perhaps, for adaptive purposes to nip at the futility of my situation. The clarity in how I saw my situation, the acknowledgement of the cost and the lucidity that came from this comprehension gave me a sense of pride in the most destructive and ill of ways.

But that is that.

The honesty is also to be admired. Prisoners are punished and the pretence of the sick joke that prison is for the rehabilitation of offenders is done away with.

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I peer through tendrils my hair has now become, another irritant to my sensitive eyes and an impediment to my ration which I cannot chew without thick strands of hair wrestling with my jaws and tongue for the food. I have been starving myself for a time and a vision appears in a state, the reality of which I am unsure, veins of overgrown ivy swallowing a sad, miserable untended house. I see the house as a mirror.

I can no longer rely on my sight as a source of information that can be trusted. I stare at the wall in front of me, made up of a plaster of Paris like material, its din too dark to offer any reflection, designed purposefully of a matted material that does not absorb light though glints of luminosity flicker over its coarse surface, I think. Unable to even see an outline of a shadow of the shape of myself, I don't know how long I've scanned its pocked, unflushed surface. The patterns I can make out of the dried material become molten in the burned examination of my stares. Like unset meringue I see greyish white material drip and warp, throbbing toward me.

For a time I thought how I would like to feel the sensation of material against me. I have long ago given up on memories as the pain of my recollections became too much though they still manage to seep through like a poison.

My eyes close. A moon like surface appears, deep craters, pure black starless sky and I feel no air but no suffocation, neither warmth nor cold. I amble a few yards as if my body has been awoken from atrophy. A hollow vacuum of soundlessness. Like a child fearful of looking under their bed for what horror they might find, I try to flee any sound that can take me from this vacuum. I feel no sense of my weight under me and I can't lift my arms from their sides. My eyes open.

I cry.

I scream.

I try with to break my bones knowing the futility of this act, my limbs to numb to feel. I try to shit in anger. I need remove myself from my body. In frenzy I jerk minimally until I feel a pain. A stomach ache? A puncture? A neck spasm? I pass out. I deserve to die. That would be just but this is not. The crime I committed and the suffering I caused was in passion and addiction. But this is more evil, this is studied and perfected, a pure gluttonous feast of torture. There is no cause or reason for such inhumanity.

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Positive my body is a wreck now, I can barely move my tongue to activate the water tube. The taste of the food has long since left my memory, I feel it there though unfinished, rotting because of the organisms from my saliva. My insides leak from me. A weeping wound assaulted by excrement results in the most acutely painful sting between my legs, jolting me briefly from time to time into painful consciousness. The smell is putrid fume and I'm almost sure it is toxic as I pass out now with regularity, my body perhaps finally setting me free, forgiving me for the tortures I have put it through or it could just be the lack of water and food.

I cannot move at all. The last movement I recall was an involuntary vomiting that felt as if it had fallen from every orifice of my body. It doesn't matter much. I am optimistic that I

will die soon. My body as a functional entity is no more and I think it will be a peaceful and easy death.

I will be victorious in the end. Those that did this to me will themselves die one day but they will not want it, they will want to cling to life, to perhaps hold a loved one once more, get drunk one last time, go for a walk, eat one last fantastic meal, see a sun set, a sun rise, all these things that I imagine, within my own limited resources, constitute some of the good things life has to offer. I also imagine they would like to die with some dignity, to pass on some wise words or some other things my wasted memory cannot recall but they won't. They will die alone and afraid and most likely under the influence of some pain killer warping their memories of loved ones and things held dear and life will not have granted them the peace they thought they had earned. Unlike me, happy, willing and ready, wishing it had already happened. I really hope they find this fucking ship and inhale the stench of my life and death and somehow find my memories and realise they failed and I died unrepentant for I am happy to have done what I did so that it has brought me here, to truth.

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Amongst rows of cryogenic chambers, laid out in perfectly symmetrical grid, walk two men in white lab coats, illuminated by the unnatural and unpleasant glow from the chambers, one, older, holding a tablet, more familiar and comfortable in his surroundings, the other, younger and still impressed by the inherent status of his lab coat, half in awe of his surroundings, half trying to listen.

Glancing up and down from his tablet, pointing at the various chambers and explaining, "Fear and pain as we've now definitively discovered are humans most primary and powerful emotions. Our only response to them is that we want to them to end. We've been able to not only induce the prisoner's most terrible fear and pain but to harness them, extract them and keep the prisoner in their most fearful or painful state or sometimes both,

until the mind cures itself,” he pauses then flicks at the tablet, “Oh look, this one has crossed over and is no longer a threat. Total rehabilitation! Our job is done. We maintain the sentence, monitor and report on prisoner status. This one will no longer be under our remit and will be transferred as soon we finish logging the report. That’s why most new staff start in this department, it provides a wide range of scope as to the service we provide”.

They move on again, the senior technician pointing at various chambers and with a hint of pride in his voice says, “This one has a phobia of giving birth, she is kept in constant labour. This one was raped as a child and before each assault, after using the toilet the abuser would flush, this was how they knew what was about to happen and it is this moment, in which they were crippled with fear is where we keep them. This is our longest inmate, four years. Afraid of heights. He is kept teetering on the ledge of a skyscraper. This one’s a bit odd, I haven’t seen this code before”, he flicks and swipes at the tablet a little more rapidly then makes a facial expression of uneasy acceptance.

“It seems

they have been broken but, em, but, they’ll need to be re-evaluated.”

“Have you

ever seen this before?”

“Not since

I’ve been here. I’ve heard of it though but it usually results in complete cognitive breakdown.

The job is complete in a sense though it is not the result we want.”

“So what will

happen now?”

“It’s above our

pay grade. We’ll just log it, we’ve a big enough work load so let’s not dwell on it. I need to show you the cooling system.”

They walk

briskly on.