

Change is a crazy mother fucker. I read change in the same way that I read Hunter S. Thompson books, with irony and a pinch of disbelief. It comes at you subtly, with wafts of warning like a shift of scent in the air. You can feel one season hot on the heels of another, like smelling jasmine for the first time this spring. It can lift your heart, similar to the unwrapping of a gift.

Some change is hard though. In fact a lot of it is, it's not asked for but we don't have the muscle to stop it. Our children grow up, their faces change, and their little teeth fall out to be replaced by adult ones. They start surprising you, like my friend's nine year old who called his older brother a 'fuck arse' not too long ago. It is funny yes, but it also horrifies us, their loss of innocence. Maybe because we know we lost it too?

I have discussed this numerous times with various people, how when long-term relationships end one's world can be flipped on its head. It is a sensation similar to being anaesthetized for an operation. It feels so surreal, the knowledge of an ending; everything you held so sacred dissolving into nothing like two cheap Eno's in a glass of ordinary tap water. It is the same when someone dies. There is no going back; you will never hug them warmly and have it mean the same thing ever again.

Being powerless is maybe the worst. Three years ago I took my domestic worker for a driving lesson that resulted in her crashing my car. I was more worried about calling my boyfriend than the fact that my car was wrecked, ruined parts literally strewn over some poor soul's grave. I knew, as the car ramped and smashed over the granite that change was coming, and it terrified me more than the accident and the money and the stress and the insurance.

Living in denial of a love that had faltered long ago, I reached breaking point that day, and so did he. We fought over the car and my stupidity, which was really a sad, characterless metaphor for our relationship. How pathetic really, Hunter S. would've done something way more interesting, like crashed it into the Umgeni River where it meets the Indian Ocean, on a Friday evening at Blue Lagoon. And the angry

*drag racers would've pulled us out the water through the thick braai smoke and lynched us for accidentally flattening the bunny chow stand.*

*Instead though, as I knelt before him begging him not to leave, I lost every ounce of dignity I had left. I watch myself from above now, kneeling before him just like I would do at church when I was a child. The irony of putting something inaccessible and unattainable on a pedestal is not lost to me. I won't do that again, it is belittling.*

*His car sped away from our home, and I slumped on the veranda floor with hot tears and snot drying on my face. Strangely, I had waves of relief between the grief, tides of change coming at me like a weird harsh medicine. I realised that everything I had held sacred; well, maybe it stopped being sacred some time ago. Maybe the Eno's had been half-dissolved for some time and all I needed was to stir the spoon.*

*In begging for him to not leave me, to halt the change storming towards me like a raging bull bent of goring my heart out; I did lose what remained of my dignity. But I know now that in order to rebuild who you are you have to give away everything. You test the complete pliability of your own skin, how empty you can really become.*

*That is why, when we end relationships, we exist in a shell for a long time. We don't eat, we purify ourselves with alcohol and we think about nothing. Our work suffers, our friends worry, and our family try and take us out for coffee. We only want it black, harsh and stringent. We don't want that fucking cutesie cookie on the saucer. Take your short bread and shove it lady.*

*But it passes. It goes. The change settles in, like a new picture on the wall. Eventually, we don't notice it anymore. Our skin regains lustre, we smile without sarcasm, we genuinely do want to eat a sandwich and have it taste good. We want, again, to share things with people. The cracks in our frames fill up with substance; our hearts pump blood instead of nothing. We take risks again, we want to love again. I think more than being loved, we want to love.*

*It is disturbing how quickly things change. Grass can change colour over night with the juice of one good storm, your mother or father or child can die and erase an entire dimension of your life. You can find out you're pregnant, or you're becoming a father. All it takes is a pee stick and a few seconds. You can win money, find money, and lose money. It's all instantaneous, it's all unexpected.*

*My family had a woman work for us, Maggie Duma, from when I was two years old. It's the typical South African domestic worker scenario, and yes, she was warmth and strength to me. I was working in South Korea when she was found dead on the corner of my parent's road. Maggie had been to church with my Mom, and then dropped off at her friend's house less than five hundred meters down the road. No-one really knows what happened, but it became apparent to me that her life ended less than an hour from when my Mom had been sitting with her in church. I wonder if my Mom felt it coming, like how I smell the jasmine but I can't see the actual plant.*

*I woke up in Busan on the South Korean coast, and I checked my emails while the Korean man I was seeing slept. We'd been out to watch a movie the night before, I can't remember which one. I had urgent messages to call home. It was Zam in South Africa but I couldn't wait, my stomach was churning. I spoke to my Dad while the world seemed bigger and stranger than I remembered, and I cried. Joonsang woke up and stood by me while I sobbed and listened to my Dad's voice trying to soothe me. It was impossible. We said goodbye, and I tried to explain to Joonsang who had died and how, but the language barrier was too difficult to transcend. In the end he said 'It doesn't matter Kat, I see you're upset' and he hugged me tightly. Grief doesn't need translation I suppose, I was happy he was there.*

*I know that I will never stop fearing change; as it's usually a bitter pill to swallow. But I guess being able to accept it, and use it, and grow from it is life's little hard-ball giggle in getting us to develop. Losing everything*

*you've got at least a couple of times is healthy. Nothing one experiences is ever wasted, even terrible happenings bring knowledge into the world.*

*Collectively, we are the element of change, and understanding that we make our own fates by loving others and placing faith in people allows us to get the pill down without throwing it up in an unattractive puddle of vomit. Hunter S. would've downed a handful of change with bourbon, I'm sure of that. He knew what he was doing, the crazy fuck arse.*