

THE YOUTH

(vcyl - 4 pages)

Like introspective pennies dropping in the slot machine of my mind. A small room, my own. Shelter ... protection ... warmth. The place of freedom, this small box. Ironical, isn't it, this locking away of oneself from the beautiful free spaces of the world, from exposure to the cruelty and insensitivity of people. To isolate oneself from freedom in order to be free.

Here my mind is like a bird. Space ... light ... huge sweeping landscapes and drifting visions. No walls. The freedom of discovery of myself and the minds of those who came before me. How incredible it is to lay in that warm retreat, drenched in the cascading vibration of Bach. Tumbling structural masses of chords beating me down only to miraculously reform with a splendour so powerful, so compelling that my heart soars ... and I cry with joy!

Here in this room I am safe when I become Dostoyesvski's murderer, listening for the footsteps ... tingling with secure terror at the scratch of the branch on the window. I choke with the grandeur and compassion of Steinbeck, fighting life's struggle, starving, loving and crying out passionately against life's injustice till my eyes are heavy with sleep.

In the warmth of my bed the sensual touch of Mellor's hand on the skin of Lady Chatterley is mine, sliding slowly down that smooth warm body, searching and probing contours and secret places ... short breathed, reaching, until another lonely climax leaves me sad ... and guilty ... and tired.

Until morning ... Renewed. How incredible is my world! To dissolve myself in the creative event of sketching or painting a single simple object, gently withdrawing its individuality from its way of reflecting light waves, and lovingly rearranging the patterns to serve my feelings. What an incredible sense of power, and yet ... such gentle power.

My mind is like blotting paper. A kaleidoscope of exciting patterns, feelings, experience, love ... knowledge!!!

Knowledge is love is knowledge! Life is a controlled obsession! I am soaking in the passion of greatness before me ... men who felt and spoke with a fire that exists long after their death. And I'm alive!! So alive! Feeding on their gift, a brew so rich I think my mind is exploding!! I must be mad! Crazy! But so incredulous and excited that all I can do is sit, and cry ...

To cry ...? Tears ...

It is sad ...

You see, I'm scared, absolutely shit scared!

These men, these creators. They *lived* and *felt* their lives. What they wrote, they experienced first, and their creation was an expression of their living, a living proof of the resolution of their fear! They had guts! Courage! They lived and felt with passion, the more so to imprint the sheer joy of experience on the slate of their creation. They DID! They FELT experience! The cold, the hot, the love, the lust, the fear, the hate! They did it!

I lie carefully locked in my cave like a voluptuous whore, fat on the food of others' experience, revelling in reliving the feelings that others have felt, wheedling out the second hand knowledge and experience of the courageous, the sensitive, the loving and the compassionate.

It is time for me to live my own life. Yet why? Why? Why ... do I fear???

God knows ... I only know the fear! It doesn't make sense, but it's real.

To love is to risk! I want to love, and I feel lovable, but who would love me? How does one ask?? Won't they laugh? How does one give? Won't they reject? How do I know I can do any of it. If I try, and fail, it will confirm my fears. If others see my failure, what hope have I got? This room is safe! Even its loneliness is sweet. I know myself and tend not to hurt myself. But one day I must come out and live my own life.

I remember Anne visiting me. A simple exchange I guess, but real! A real person, feelings, fears, and worth a month of books.

She was older than me; gentle, strong and, I thought, very worldly. When she entered my room the sense of female, voluptuous, heady, was almost overpowering. I couldn't breathe properly, confusion fighting excitement and desire, and the embarrassment of her possibly noticing the condition that her mere presence induced in me!

"I have brought my sketches. You remember ... you said you would help me ... if it's not too much trouble."

I trembled as she spread them on the bed, my fear leaving me gauche unaware of her own fears at exposing her efforts to my supposedly critical eye. She was careful, gently anxious as she spoke, aware of her movements and words, of her body, and watching me carefully to gauge her effect on me; shyly withdrawing or subtly offering a skirt revealed thigh, or the deep necked cleavage revealed as she leaned towards me. Her breast brushed my arm as she leaned to straighten a drawing. I became aware that she knew of her power as she studied my reaction to each premeditated movement of her body, gently testing my responses, and retreating to give me space.

Oh, God! I became an idiot! Chattering nonsense! Filling the space and time with irrelevant rubbish to cover the fear ripping blows within me, at battle with choking desire. I distanced myself, using words and intellect to kill the desire and my keening need for contact. Using familiar fear like a knife to cut out the introjected cancer of rejection.

She left, confused and probably a little hurt. We had seemed to have so much in common.

And left me to my thoughts ...! God, what a fool I am! Why, oh why!!

I knew that she had made love to a friend of mine who was older. She surely wouldn't have wanted to go to bed with someone like me? Besides, she was my friend's occasional girlfriend and it wouldn't be right for us to have?!

It's no good I shut the door again. She came to share and to love ... I failed, even though

she walked into my sanctuary, I failed, and can no longer face her.

I must learn to live, one day ...

I wonder if it is easier when you're older?

Or is it too late??

She was so beautiful

Victor Cusack - 1983