

hunting for butter flies

an ode to the cleaners
of the streets

I'm not sure
if this should
be here. It is my
own personal feeling
about the guys, and
this publication is
not about that. Still
I couldn't date it out.

I used to say this but it
maybe comes across to
agressive. What I mean that
it does not have to be
good. It should just
be what it is.

Ok, let me try this on my own way.
I don't have that much time and I really
want to do this. So I am going to be
honest and most probably not well
edited or censored. Also forgive my
English but I am not a native speaker
and I decided this time to write this
all on my own. ~~Fuck it.~~ No extra corrections.
No making it sound better. It is what
it is. Nothing more. Nothing less.

This whole part is really problematic. Because this is already the world we live in. This is the reality of many people who goes from one job to another. Actually most people have to juggle between different jobs. How very naive from me to put it like this.

I guess what I want to say is to go from job to job not out of necessity but because we would want it like that. Because we would value that. The norm would be to value that.

Imagine we live in a world where we can choose different professions in the course of our lives. We can start with something and then few years later we can change. And then change again. As much as we want. And for reasons we want.

Imagine that this would be the norm.*

* Not out of necessity but because we would want it like this.

Professions, jobs, vocations would not have to represent (only) how much money we earn, or desire to earn.

Or what our passion is, our interest. But they could serve as a tool to understand how the things simply are. What surround us. We all could work as cleaners, farmers, post deliverers, bar tenders, kindergarten teachers, cemetery gardeners and care givers. It would be normal to shift between these professions and step in whenever it is necessary.

artists

Could that be pilots?
Surgeons? Teachers?
What else?

I believe that we would benefit enormously if we could have different works and different colleagues in the course of our lives. However I am not confident or ready to spread my belief yet, but I can share my own story. What it did to me. On the personal level.

I had the privilege in the last 4 years to do several internships as part of my artistic work. I worked in an elderly house, in a hotel, in a cemetery and with social workers and nurses among others. This book is specifically inspired by the work with a group of street cleaners. I was privileged because I could leave my work as a freelance artist and join these other professions. Thanks to my precarious lifestyle as I don't have a fix job and therefor I owe responsibility to no one, except myself. Nevertheless it is a privilege, because I can choose and I am aware of that.

Very difficult subject.
It is not that easy to know what my real privilege is.
I really have to think about this more.
It is much easier for me to say why I am not privileged than actually say why I am.

However, from this, I wrote a hypothesis. A desire to find a way to pass this on to others. It is merely an idea, looking for its place in the world, not yet knowing where to go and how to be shared. It has many blind spots or as we say, back in my country: Több sebből vérzik. But perhaps, by starting to share it. Open it up to others. To you. Discuss it. Argue it. Question it. Value it. Take it. Leave it. Love it or hate it. Maybe. It can start to move. Somewhere.

Thanks for taking the time to read it. And if you have anything to share with me, I look forward hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Olivia

It bleeds from many wounds

It won't be about love,
fight or being a hero
all at once,
or your whole life,
or ever.
But about finding
that very special
feeling in your stomach,
when you just simply
feel alive...

I believe
they call
it butterflies...





Lately I have been thinking about the term ~~midlife~~ crisis, "a transition of identity and self-confidence that can occur in middle-aged individuals, typically 45 to 64 years old"*

~~I am 36 years old so not yet in this age category but~~ I do experience this identity crisis on a daily basis for many years. Not only because I might be just a loser (yes I am) but there are definitely outside circumstances (all the shit things happening around, basically the world falling apart etc..) which also makes me continually question what I am doing with my life.

maybe it is just a crisis?
Maybe I should not mention the midlife thing. It can be misleading, bringing the focus to the age thing when it is exactly not about the age thing.

This is me, Olivia ←

* quoted from Wikipedia



Wikipedia says also that:

“Studies on ~~midlife~~ crises show that they are less common than popularly believed, according to Vaillant (2012) in his 75-year longitudinal study ~~on adult development~~, he found midlife crises were rare experiences for people involved in the study.”

I thought about this a lot, but I don't agree. I believe there are quite some people out there who also question their motives and choices. Who sometimes wish they could start all over and do something else instead. Like me. ~~And they can already be much younger than 45.~~ What do you think? Look, it reads further.

I think it is about value in general and our value system. I guess we all have our different ones and we also have the one we all share together. I was wondering here if our value system is at a right place. Individually and collectively.

"The phenomenon is described as a psychological crisis brought about by events that highlight a person's growing age (ok this might be an issue when you are older, although what older is, is debatable), inevitable mortality (mortality is pretty much around the corner, right?), and possibly lack of accomplishments in life (yes feeling like a loser when accomplishments are defined by weird measures). This little book is too short to discuss that further, but I hope you feel what I mean.)"

what are these?
you should name them

This may produce feelings of intense depression (yes it can), and high levels of anxiety (oh yes), or the desire to achieve youthfulness (I am not discussing this now) or the desire to make drastic changes to their current lifestyle (because this is my subject exactly)."

To talk very frankly about myself,
sometimes I wake up and I don't know
any more why I do what I do and I wish
I could do something different, but I don't
even know what. I feel overloaded with
everything.

Should I save the trees in the Amazonas
or be a human wall in Palestine?
Should I be happy with what I have
or strive further? I don't know where
to start...

Unfortunately, I have not found a magical
solution that will make this feeling
disappear (I also don't think it should
disappear). But there is something that
is happening to me. Something good.
And maybe it could be happening to you?
If you feel the same way, as I do...
So, here it comes:

Thinking of
my privilege,
this is definitely
one of them.

That I have
space in my
mind to be
busy with that.

* I had a friend
who told me once
that we shouldn't
always try to find
solutions to our problems
immediately, because
sometimes it is also
good to sit in our own
shit and just let it be.

What if we stop calling
this feeling a crisis
and instead welcome it
as a new possibility,
a trigger, a spark,
a window to change?

That we stop looking at it as a bad thing, like an unnecessary struggle. Something we should feel ashamed of. Something we should solve immediately before anyone would notice it.

And instead we start looking at it as a good thing. Like 'Hey, it's maybe time now to take a look at what I am and what I do and yes I am willing to take the challenge to go to the bottom of it, if I need/should or simply just want to change.

Imagine, when we are stuck, uninterested, unmotivated, uninspired, we could just step out of our life for a moment.

Nothing big.

Nothing serious.

Nothing we can't reverse.

Only a peek into another kind of life, another kind of set up and routine that could give us a new insight (maybe even a bird view of ourselves and others), a new idea but foremost that special feeling in our stomach, when we fall in love for the first time, because we just simply feel alive...

what I mean by butterfly

A sequence of actions regularly followed. What you don't think about much, if at all, but you do every day. Of course it is really broad what that can be. To keep things simple and effective routine here is understood as a working routine. The work you do on daily basis.

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This is Jeroen who was always happy to see me at work and was curious about what I do as an artist.

Welcome to 'Hunting for butterflies'

You choose another profession for
some time and you do it in-
stead of yours. If you can't leave
your job, you can scale the method
down and do it once a week
or for few hours a month.
I used to believe that there
is always a possibility to adjust.
But that is again
very naive from me.

A method in 4 steps.

meaning:

Step out of your own routine,
your daily patterns,
the one's so familiar
you don't have to think about them.

And instead,

take on the routine of someone else,
someone you don't know.

And it might give you
your butterflies back...



This is Martin who always helped me
with everything I needed to be helped with.



STEP 1

Choose wisely



I think I have to be more daring and name what I want to name. It is not about a job that would be fun to do. A job that would be nice to do. I'm still not sure how to define that the best. It's a combination of things. But it is not an easy, quick decision.

You don't always have to get out of your comfort zone, but sometimes yes. And now it is that time. If you do this method, then do it fully and choose a routine you have always been intrigued by. A work that might be practically far from what you do, but perhaps close in essence. Or a work that you have no idea about, that none of your friends or family are doing. Or a work you would never have chosen to do. The more you dare, the bigger the contrast will be and the more inspiring the results.

I chose the work routine of street cleaners (I am an artist). It is a work I always admired. It is physical (My work can be physical too but not that physical). It happens outdoors (My work mostly happens indoors). It has a steady routine (My work has no steady routine). A safety of continuity (My work has no safety). It is concrete (It takes at least 5 minutes to explain to people what actually I do as an artist). It is a work where the impact is touchable and sensible (The impact of art often is subject of debates). Because it is right in front of your eyes (Because it is not right in front of your eyes).

→ I'm drawn to works that make our social, physical infrastructure run. The works that needs to be done because otherwise we would be fucked. The works that are actually done by other people. So I don't have to do it. So that I have time to do some-thing else. I think it's crazy. I feel like a child. Sometimes. Asking but why? ^{How} did it become?



This is Stanley who often asked about how my children are doing. We

talked a lot about them. Education, doctors and other parenting subjects.

How do include everyone?
How do make this safe
for anyone? For any gender.
Race. Sexuality. Background.

I cannot know this on my own.
I have to discuss this with
others.

I tried to make it sound like
an easy thing to do, but I've
to be honest with you. To get
the green light to do the inter-
ship can take some time and
effort. Sometimes it can go smooth.
Sometimes it can be hard.

STEP 2

Don't run away on the first day

Ok, so you have already chosen a routine and discussed (with the people in charge) that you will do the work for some time. The first day is going to be difficult. The moment when your new colleagues don't yet know who you are, what you do, or what you want from them.

It can be awkward and it is tempting to run away. To just go back home and continue as you were. But don't worry, it will get better. Fortunately, not everything needs to be explained and understood on the first day. It takes some time to know how to introduce yourselves, how to talk about why you are here, and to find the proper words. You are learning.

This is Paul who always made me laugh
and who took care of me from the first day.



I wake up at 6.30. It is my first shift with the guys. I am nervous. I convince myself that they will hate me and think that I am some kind of weirdo coming to work with them. But ok, I pull myself together and I enter the canteen. There is a warm atmosphere. Someone sits at the entrance and tells everyone who enters, that this person is the nicest person. He makes everyone laugh. Me too. I will learn later his name is Paul and what I don't know yet, is that he will take care of me for the rest of my time here. People ask me who I am and if I have kids. Luckily I have 2 kids and so bamm we have a connection. They like to talk about their kids. Me too. We go sit in the van and I have the feeling that most of us are not originally from the Netherlands. I am right. Bamm another connection. First time in my life I feel confident speaking in Dutch. It is such a nice feeling after 15 years of living here.

STEP 3

Focus on what you can do

Of course there are certain types of jobs that you cannot do without having learned it before. But in every place there will always be something you can do and while doing that you can build up your repute of the hardworking, determined and ambitious fella you are. And because of that, because of your appetite to learn and to do as much as you can do, people will start to see you and appreciate you. They will start to care for you. They will cherish you. They will want to teach you. They will want to give you what you need. And just like that, you will start to learn things you have not learned before.

another blindspot. not everyone is able to build their repote



This is for who taught me how to take care of myself while doing this work

It is autumn. The streets are covered with leaves. Paul and Cor blow them from the pavement, from the doorsteps, from under the cars into the street so that the sweeper can suck it all up and bring it to the trash. This action to me (blowing the leaves with a leaf blower) looks like a scene from the Bible.* Men walking and the leaves moving in front of them. It looks so impressive and powerful but not in a commending, dominating way. More like strong, solid and secure. Sure in what they are doing, what they have to do.

I get a broom and my task is to help the process of bringing everything into the street for the sweeper. I wish I could blow the leaves too for the reasons mentioned above, but ok I am swiping. I am swiping.

My back hurts as I have to bend over the broom, so that I can hold it properly. A big garbage truck is passing us. They stop. The driver gets out and walks directly towards me. I wonder who this guy is and if I did something wrong. I don't understand what he says, because the sound of the leaf blowers. He takes my hand from the broom and places it in a way that I don't have to bend anymore. Then he whispers in my ear, 'you have to take care of your back'. He walks back to his truck and leaves. I continue swiping and I wonder how he knew from a split second that my back was hurting.

Am I romanticizing this work? My gut feeling says no. But maybe

*'Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.' (Exodus 14:21)

my intention is not enough. I've to think about this.



*This is Abdel who made me feel visible
each day, by saying a kind, small word to me.*

Step 4

Take your time to leave

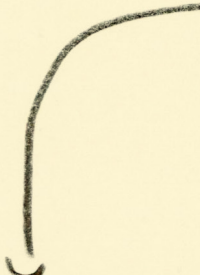
You are reaching the end of your internship. You are almost ready to leave. But how to go? How to leave? Is there a way without leaving all these behind? If yes, then how? Is there a way for something to stay? If yes, then how? I don't know all the answers myself. So I thought, perhaps it is ok to not know. For now. To not have answers for everything immediately. It has been a rich period with lots of things. You met new people. You learned new things.
Take your time to leave.

I am writing this publication right now.
I am in my kitchen. I have not shown this
to anyone. No conversation partner, no
one to question me, confront me, agree
with me, disagree with me. No filter.
No censor. It feels quite liberating to
be able to share all these just as it is.
Not more. Not less. But it is also terrifying
to let that all go out into the world. I hope
you don't mind, that I took this liberty.

As I am sitting here I think about what
it all means. What it means to me and
what it could mean to others. Why anyone
should care. Why I care. I think about my
stomach. The butterflies. When I am
with them. The feeling that I am alive.
That I can make connections. That I can
learn. I can work with my hands. I am
strong. I can integrate. I can be the
first one awake.

But most importantly that I can do this.
And if I can do this, then there must be
others who can do it as well. This must
mean something. This has to matter for
someone somewhere. This could break
walls. The butterflies. The feeling when
you do something for the first time.
When you see something for the first
time. When you get to know someone
for the first time. When you make new
connections. Between you. And the rest
of the world. It is like you rewire yourself.
You meet yourself and the other anew.

This publication be my first attempt
to share these butterflies with you.
The possibility. For you too.



will you go back to your life
and care differently?



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