



[Part I available here]

Dr Pauline Picot //

Part Two – Chipped

PSYCHIATRIST

Please describe

The very texture of your thoughts

Please evaluate

Your concentration ability

I hated my twenties. I saw all these people around me partying, taking drugs, having meaningless sex – testing limits. I was staring at them from the other side of a hard pane. All I wanted to do was bang my head against it and make it shatter. But my eagerness is precisely what kept me from doing it. I felt too desperate for it all. With my obscure symptoms all leading me towards self-destruction, I knew that if I went down that

Please review
Your last sexual intercourse
Please give your opinion
On the dosage increase
And please
I don't want to hear about
The light fading in your eyes

LOVER

You want to make love
And a nice lunch plate
A rift free routine
But the plate is chipped
And the love is chipped
And as you ignore it
It becomes a rift
And the rift a chasm
It's 9am and we're on each side
Of the Grand Canyon of life

PSYCHIATRIST

You are not crazy
We don't use that word in here
You are atypical
Singular
Peculiar
I am taking notes
Talk away
You are quite a case
I must say

LOVER

Your face is –
I swear babe your face is –
Alert – this is not a love poem
I have to say your face is –
Imperceptibly shifting
In the dark, you are imperceptibly
Becoming a stranger to me
A different person
Alert – this is not a metaphor

road, I would never come back. And yet it was precisely what was appealing to me so badly.

I felt very angry at that time, bursting with frustration and not understanding my own rage. I mean – I was not an adolescent anymore – if I had ever been one. So why this *teenager* behaviour (the temper tantrums, the self-harming, the eating disorder) ? On the recommendation of my general practitioner, I was seeing a psychotherapist. But either she was inefficient, or I was blocking whatever awkward efforts she was making to reach through me, that wasn't working for me. So I quit.

And then my life split into two simultaneous and parallel paths. While I was intellectually high-performing and professionally successful (I had my first creative texts published in 2012, I obtained a Masters degree in 2013 and a PhD scholarship in 2015), my mental health was steadily degrading. The most accurate image I can now find to describe it is a filter unexpectedly and abruptly covering my sight and making me see reality as if it were crumbling apart. The nightmares were surprisingly – as they are such a common experience – the most taxing of symptoms. I had up to four a night, and woke up not being able to differentiate my reality from reality itself. Both were merging into one unstable entity spreading over everything. And yet most of the time, I was doing okay. That is what made it so difficult to break down my situation to my (rare, albeit precious) friends, who thought I was just being sensitive and maybe a little too complacent with my own feelings. That is also why I didn't share any of it to the man I met then. I thought that his love and support would be enough to contain and stabilize and mend me. I was wrong.

His eyes are pits gobbling me down
His mouth a sneering rip
Who is he
Who are you

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you need more drugs ?
My pen awaits right on the paper
Ask away – I have the power
To make it all fade away
It is a shrewd game we're playing
And I trust you to not kill yourself
It is not in the rulebook
Although it is a possible extension

LOVER

You have a loving family
You have invaluable friends
You have me
You are not a society dropout
You are a published writer
You rent a comfortable flat
You should feel fine – good – amazing
You should praise every second of every day
For every day you should be grateful
You should not shed a single tear – ever
You should should should
Should should shame shame should shame
Shame on you

PSYCHIATRIST

Your office is depressing
Your books are terrifying
Your curtains smell damp
And you are creepy-looking
It all screams me to surrender
You should hammer it all
Blast it all and take us outside
The hard wind saving me
Blowing my hair away
Clearing my mind away

I reached the point when my dreams convinced me I was a killer/pedophile/rapist in the making. I couldn't take it anymore, so I went to see a hypnotherapist. Now that I look back at it, it is astonishing how I had lost sight of the big picture. I did not consider my general poor health; I just wanted to get rid of a heavy inconvenience without even thinking of digging deeper. And I must give credit to this hypnotherapist: she quickly determined that she could not handle my distress on her own, and that I was in urgent need of clinical help. Thanks to her – and so late after my first 2010 psychological hardships – I met with a psychiatrist who suggested (and did not affirm) the BPD diagnosis.

I felt hugely relieved to find out that my numerous symptoms were not that of numerous diseases. Instead, all this was literally – as I intuitively felt it – a matter of filter that tinged my life in a very ruthless light. And the decisive difference this diagnosis made for me is learning that *I did not choose* to see life this way. I was not complacent with myself.

Because of its many psychological and environmental causes combined with its wide range of symptoms, there is no unique and official treatment for BPD yet – not in France anyway. So it was a guessing game, until we settled for an appropriate medication, coupled with the most useful medicine in my case – steady monitoring and in-depth analysis.

I started to feel better, and proud for taking those steps by myself. My family was there, but a little puzzled at my way of handling everything while they could also find me sobbing in a corner over an untouched yogurt. As for my companion, he was frowning upon my medical treatment as a non-essential

And you would buy me candy floss
Toss the meds and get me the glasses
I never had – supple and hard
To look reality in the face
You will tell me how I radiate
With my candyfloss hair
And how life is candyfloss
Sweet and passing
And that it's okay
Is it over yet –
Here are your 60€

LOVER

You are falling asleep
As my soul is crumbling
Your body withering
It's only fair since I too
Am in the shape of a person falling asleep
And this shape is whole
And it's a trick
You would need to force my mouth
Open with a torch
To look down the ruins within
But you are oh so tired
You gave up on me

luxury, casually encouraging me to see the bright side of things – and not seeing that it was precisely what I was fighting so hard to do. In the end, it remains a shard in my heart to recognize that his attitude hampered my getting better. I loved him and he surely loved me. But he would love me whole – and not chipped as I was, as I am, and as I will probably always be.

Cover Picture by Pauline Picot