

Tales on a Page_17. Our Lives Are Teacup, An Epiphany

[Best read while listening quietly to one of the most influential tracks of all time: Blue Monday, New Order, 1983 (12" version)]. In therapy today I had an epiphany, and I left smiling. Pretty rare and unusual during the last six years. As can often be the case, I don't always know in depth or at all what we'll cover. Today was such a day, yet the outcome can be even more surprising.

Imagine your life since your first breath is encompassed within a teacup. It could be plain or fancy, china or porcelain, but it is always made just for you. **And it will be the only one.** You curate that cup, protect it and its contents as best as you can, but inevitably there may be chips or scratches along the way. Critically, your cup always needs to be viable as a vessel to contain your life. There will more than likely be even some residue left of your life in the cup, like tea stains the interior over time.

For some of us, and certainly for me, whatever we try to do, our cups can be damaged, cracked, or multiple cracks, or at worst shattered, the pieces spread out like being dropped on the floor. We may try to repair our cup, to tend to the crack or cracks, and if feasible to painstakingly glue each fragment together until perhaps the cup is not only looking whole, but also waterproof again. **It is still a vessel.** Unless you can recure the cup in a kiln, or repaint the exterior, the cup will retain the lines of all the cracks and glue, it will be wabi sabi, we can even embrace the beauty of such imperfections, to see the glue now as part of the whole.

Some of us may be skilled enough, to be innately artisanal that we manage to recreate this vessel for life, to recognise all its faults, or at least the most visible. Some of us are not, and even worse, the cup cannot continue to be a vessel, your life's receptacle, it leaks or it may not retain any of your life at all. Without it, sadly, maybe your life cannot or will not continue itself. The cup has just been too damaged. In others, the artisans, those skilled enough, the cup is as has been described, but many of the smaller faults, the cracks, and maybe even some large, are hidden, not visible to others, or able to be ignored by us. I'm definitely someone who was able to hide and ignore the faultlines in my cup.

And we each continue, that glue holding, our lives progressing. Occasionally, a section of glue may fail, a crack becomes live again, our vessel is impaired and our lives may leak. We hit a rough patch, we are lesser than we were, and we work to repair that crack again, on our own or with others. For some of us, the break in the integrity of our cup widens, the leaks increase, and our fragile lives within are more at risk. The cup may be able to continue its task, it may continue to leak, or it may fail altogether, the glue desiccated and no longer able to bind. Of course, should the cup have been so broken, *shattered*, there will always be risks that integrity may fail. The vessel is now incompetent at its job. At worst, all the pieces are everywhere, like it was when originally dropped. It will take a very skilled craftsperson and even better glue to try to put your cup back together again. If it can be saved, then life continues, but always with fear of fragility, the porcelain or china so weakened, that we need to take so much extra care. We will need to divert our focus, our energy, our careful hold, around our cup, maybe more so than on what it contains.

But some of us, the ones where our cups were shattered, where we may have hidden the cracks, tried to hide or ignore them from even ourselves, well, the cup remains at risk. Worse, the glue fails, the walls of the cup collapse, it is no longer a vessel. Our cup was so broken, it may never be repaired, or at best just enough to hold a little of what it used to. Even more, and the epiphany for me, was that we are looking for *permission*, to accept the loss of our cup, no longer its repair. Some of us will have our cups until we draw breath no more. Some of us break our own and/or others' cups. Some of us may help with their repair. And some of us lose our cups. And we need that *permission* to accept such loss. Today, that was me, and I am happy to accept that my cup cannot be repaired. Now, I live with the vestiges of life, the residue left on the inside of my cup's pieces. Not trying so desperately to glue them, when there would be more cracks than cup. *It's okay, my cup is broken, but I'm still here.*