

The Morning After

You know what it's like. The morning after.

It doesn't happen often. Not really. But it just feels so good sometimes to get out and let go. You feel so free. Liberated. You have to do it. You don't have a choice.

But the morning after...

You know what it's like.

You wake up, and it's dark, not because it's night, but because of the curtains, and the fact that you've got your face buried in a shirt which might not be yours. Your head is pounding, like your heart's decided to relocate higher up, and your eyeballs feel sort of ... tender.

Your mouth tastes awful.

Really awful.

You've got that disgusting smelly breath, and your tongue feels like it's stuck to the roof of your mouth, and if it didn't hurt so much to move you'd probably try to find a glass of water. Or possibly just a toilet.

And as you stumble into consciousness, you realise you don't remember how you got home, or even if this *is* your home, but you don't really have the brain space to think about it because your stomach is quivering ominously and you know the extreme pain in your head is nothing compared to how you'll feel if you throw up.

But you do need to pee.

So you move. Slowly, because you're stiff and sore, and you're not sure why, because the night is blurry, with the round glow of the moon, and stars and dark flashes, and you know it started out ok but after that, you just don't remember. Not yet.

And you don't quite know what happened to your clothes, but you smell, and you feel revolting, like you've rolled around in something dead, and you wonder what on earth you could have done to end up with scratches on your face.

But you get up, and put on the shirt, and visit the bathroom, but you don't turn on the lights because it's just so bright, and besides, your senses are in overload. The soap smell makes you want to hurl, and every time you move the sound feels hellishly loud and it makes you dizzy.

God only knows what happened to your hair.

You get to the kitchen, and it's bad, because it's so bright, and you feel like it goes straight through your eyes to burn holes in your brain, so you let the blinds down even though the screeching noise they make means you end up dry retching in the sink.

You'd make coffee, but the smell is too strong.

In the end you opt for something sugary, cordial or juice, or, if you're in a self-hating phase, milk.

And you take some painkillers, and then, because it's a habit, you turn the tv on, and because it's nearly midday, you have to flick through to find the news, which you half-watch with the sound turned right down.

And it's all meaningless newspeak about overseas 'peace keeping' missions, and illegal immigrants and a toddler who drowned on the Gold Coast. And the top of your head is still pounding, and you're not looking at the screen, so you nearly miss it.

Wild dog attack. Way up out the back of beyond, up in the hills.

And dreading guilt starts to line your stomach, liquid, sinking horror, as you realise that it can't have just been rabbits you ate last night.

And as you choke up all the juice and the painkillers, and bits of whoever it was you snacked on, you wish you were dead, and you wish *they* were dead, because it would be better for them, and better for you, because even though you couldn't live with being a murderer, this is so much worse.

You swore, when you found out, that you would never pass it on, that you would never ever do to anyone what had been done to you, but you must have, and nothing will ever be the same.