



Milka - Creative Concepts

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1. Coming Home (Flash Story)

A young girl tells everybody she is six and three quarters. She tells her school teachers, her friends, and even the mother who made her. She tells the man on the bus that daddy works 'Aboard' and he laughs, and says "Which Ship?" The girl just repeats, 'Aboard' as if the man was a fool, then pushes her face deep into her mother's thigh. "Her father works overseas" the mother says, and the little girl buries her face deeper and deeper, scrunching her mother's jumper in delicate fists. "But daddy's coming home tonight, isn't he?" the mother says, as the girl softly nods, rubbing her forehead on the rough fabric of a jumper, and the girl slowly nods, forehead itching from the jumper, as her heart races. She is trying to ignore her excitement because the girl is angry at her father. Like most girls who are six and three quarters, she does not really understand what anger is. To her, anger feels just the same as a birthday

party, or christmas day, or swimming on a saturday when her father throws her in the air, and catches her, then throws her up again, until the smell of sweet chlorine makes her sneeze. To little girls, anger still feels the same as excitement. She was angry when he missed her playing the personification of the wind over Bethlehem in the school play, or when she played the song from the ice cream van on a recorder, or when the nice old lady from next door, the one who gave her sweets that got stuck in her teeth, was taken away in a big car full of flowers. She was mostly angry because when her daddy came back, he always left again. *Aboard.*

Like most girls who are 6 and $\frac{3}{4}$ she is yet to understand the idea of sacrifice. Eventually, when she gets older, or so everybody keeps saying, she will *understand*. But in the moment she just wants her daddy to be there, and so as soon as mummy opens the front door, she sprints off up the stairs on all fours, and slams the bedroom door. She tried crying to see if he would come back quicker, but then stopped, and started trying hard to hate the idea of him coming home. *That'll show him.* She tried hard to hide the secret excitement, but she tried even harder to stop time. Despite this, every time she looked at the clock on the wall, the hands had still moved. When she looked outside, the light had faded. Soon, it was all gone, and just as she was telling Chumley, an Alligator, how much she hated her daddy, and how much she hated *Aboard*, there was a knock at the front door. Instinctively, she moved, but then caught herself, and instead, pushed her face between banister railings, and looked down through the gap in the staircase. She saw daddy, his head curled into mummy's neck, and then saw mummy's hand holding the back of his head. She tried to hate him all over again. They were smiling and laughing, *as though nothing had happened*, and then he looked up through the gap. He caught her eyes, and smiled, "There she is!" he shouted out, but the girl had already ran back into her room, and slammed the door, and crawled back into the gap between the bed and the wall. She heard the door creak open, and she tried to pull away the smile that had crept up onto her face. The smell of his aftershave made her nose itch, and so she buried her face in her hands. She felt him sit down beside her, in the gap between the bed and wall.

"You're not allowed here" she told him, through the gaps of her fingers.

"Oh really?" He said, and she shook her head, pushing the smile away again.

She listened as he reached into his jacket pocket and pulled something out, something crinkley. The smile returned, and this time she could not push it back.

"Stand by your beds," her daddy said, because it was what his father had said to him. The girl sneaked a peek through the gaps in her fingers. Cautiously, as though feeding a wild animal, she extended her palm to him. He put a square of the chocolate in her hand, and the warm glow of her palm started its slow melt. Then she let the square sit in her mouth, and melt into her tongue. It was sweet, and creamy. It turned what she thought was anger, into something else, and so she turned to the wall, trying, again, to hate him.

"I'll have it all to myself then" he said, getting up, until the girl spun back and snatched the whole bar off him. She looked up and saw her daddy's face smiling back at her.

“I won’t tell your mother” he said, as she snapped the chocolate bar in half, and they both giggled. Now, he held out his hand, and she placed a square of chocolate in it. The rough heat of his palm started its slow melt. He let it disintegrate on his tongue.

The little girl held out her hand to his; it only just filled the whole of his palm. They pushed them together really hard, and smiled and laughed. The melted chocolate on the sticky tips of her fingers mixed against the melted outline of a square at the center of his hand. Like most girls who are 6 and $\frac{3}{4}$, she understood the idea of forgiveness.

Response.

This story came to me as a simple, but hopefully an effective way to show one of the many connective human stories that can include Milka. Much like the girl, when I was a child, my father worked away a lot in Europe. Since then, to my mind - and I am sure much of the UK - Milka has become a kind of gatekeeper to the continent. Synonymous with holidays, and therefore, good times, family and widened horizons. I stumbled across the photo above whilst working and thinking about this project on a walk. I thought it was quite fitting.

2. A Moment In Time (Flash Story)

I was 21 and I was broke. I'd met a girl that I wanted to impress. In-fact, I wanted her to love me. I wanted her to love me because I had started to think that I loved her. And life is easier if we are all in the same boat. So I was 21, broke, in love - possibly unrequited (tbc) - and I was standing in a beautiful valley somewhere in the



Austrian countryside. I was looking at up at undulating, almost intangible, green hills. They sat so neatly before a row of faint, perfectly rugged mountains in the distance. A small river flowed down from the top as though it had been left there by a paintbrush. It disappeared behind one of the rising hills, but then broke out right in front of us, moving so fast that I felt the chill of the ice water on the underside of my chin as we walked alongside it. I'd been given a small apartment for the week from an old friend for a meagre fifty quid- have I mentioned that I was broke? - and so Daniela & I had found ourselves in a small Austrian village in the middle of nowhere, but somewhere. It was full of houses that looked like cakes. Each had its own docile cow that couldn't believe its own luck, and a cluck of irritating chickens that clearly believed theirs. The air was filled with the sound of the water, and the birds, and the clanging cow bells as they turned to stare. It was like we had walked into a postcard, or the picture on a biscuit tin. An old woman beat a carpet with a round edged stick, knocking a cloud of dust out into the crisp air. She turned to take breath, and smiled and waved over at us, the overdressed tourists. We smiled and waved back, but she just shook out her head, and starting beating again. As we walked beside the surging river, I took Daniela's hand. We were heading between two hills, but in reality, we didn't know where it was we were going. Or for how long. We just went wherever the wind couldn't reach us. We've done exactly the same ever since.

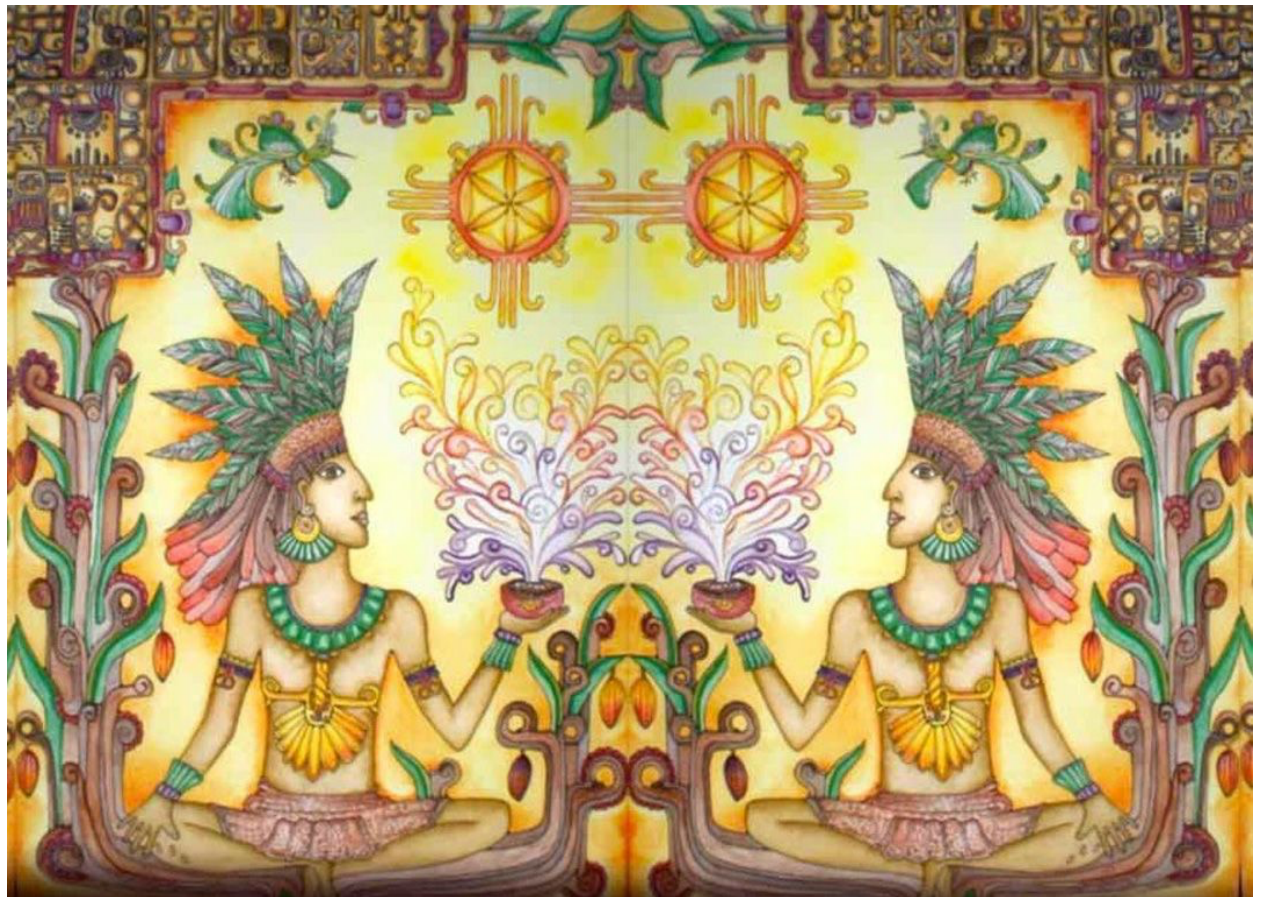
The picnic I'd bought from the local store laboured in a backpack that dragged my shoulders down - 2 rolls, some sliced cheese and ham in the european style, along with some beers, and a large bar of Milka chocolate, which I had secretly already eaten a quarter of. The guilt was bringing me down just as the weight of the backpack was. Daniela and I sat down by the riverbank and read, and generally looked out as if the world hadn't happened at all. It was like a very domestic video game, or an incredibly ordinary fairy tale. I watched as she filled her water bottle up from the stream, which was coming straight off the mountains, and I watched as the bright, pure light was guzzled up by olive skin. I handed her a roll, and a beer, and the folded up wrapper of chocolate. She felt the empty end, and laughed, and I had a swig of the stream water, hoping the whole time that there wasn't a dead animal up in the mountains somewhere, contaminating the flow. Anyway, I thought to myself as we lazed in the long grass, if this was in fact the crazy little thing everybody calls Love, then it was far too perfect for both of us to survive.

Response.

This short memory follows on from the story above, in that it describes another moment where Milka has been present at some profound point of my life. I suppose I am interested in how the foods we eat, and the taste of chocolate, the landscape surrounding it, have an impact upon our personal lives, and decisions. By sharing this quite personal memory with you, I hope it suggests that nothing is ever insignificant. Every moment of love, or connection, is always imbued by the landscape that surrounds that moment, as well as tastes and flavours with it.

Brown Gold - A Brief Exploration of Chocolate in the human story. (Creative Essay)


When the hapless everyman Forrest Gump told us that *Life is like a box of chocolates, you never what you're gonna get*, it was obvious that Chocolate had more to say about the human condition than anybody had previously thought. Or had they? Originally, it was the Aztecs who believed that the cacao seed was actually a gift from the gods. Back then, it was prepared as a bitter, ceremonial aphrodisiac drink, for the exclusive consumption of warriors, and tribal elders. The cacao seed was so valuable that it was even traded as currency.



When you see one of the many chocolate bars in a service station forecourt, it's hard to believe that such a thing could ever have been worshiped. Then again, the fact that said bar has been held aloft on a kind of altar, at the very forefront of the store, within touching distance, wrapped up like a pharaoh, with you looking down upon it - possibly salivating - suggests that maybe it still is worshipped...just in a slightly different way?

In more recent feudal times, of kings and beheadings, its elixir qualities were stripped away and its luxuriant, godlike qualities left in their place. Chocolate was exhaustively prepared on large heated stone slabs; rolled into a paste by handmaidens, scraped up, and mixed in with spices and milk as an incredibly indulgent morning drink for the king. Chocolate had become royal property, and though it has since lost this elitist, regal identity, it still remains entrenched as one of the ultimate 'Luxuries'.

But in a world where everything is sold to us as luxurious, or decadent, where every single person believes themselves to be an aforementioned king or queen, how can Chocolate retain its ancient and historic status? Should it even try? Or should it simply follow one of the paths it is currently on, such as becoming a filler snack between breakfast and lunch, lunch and dinner?




Interestingly, this latter route only circles back around to the start - chocolate as a bringer of strength, sustenance, and much needed energy - whether you are heading out to spear wildebeests in the jungle, or hurtling down M25 to spear that next client, at that next long, boring meeting.

Drinking Chocolate, lest we forget, was the start of Cacao's journey into the human story, and, once again, to this day its function still remains practically the same as it did back 430AD. We still link the drinking of chocolate to community, grief, ailments, and human endurance - whether as a tonic against the harshness of mother nature, or our own existential suffering or experience.

Where I am from hot chocolate is the first option on any hospital vending machine, despite its medicinal qualities having been reserved for raw cacao etc. It suggests that in times of shock, loss or deprivation, we still offer chocolate not because it offers us any mind bending health benefits, but because it is symbolic of human connection and emotional healing. There are rafts of sweet, hot drinks that claim to aid us against the biting cold of a ski slope, or a dimming campfire, but it's chocolate we move toward time and time again. It endures in the same way that we, as individuals, endure. For a while I volunteered at a food bank whose users were among the poorest in the country. It was a surprise for me to see that Drinking chocolate was on the list of mandatory products that had to be handed to each family, alongside sanitary products, bread and milk - some of those other symbolic food stuffs.

So what then of Chocolate's relationship with ceremony and ritual? A core part of its original identity was as a binding, godly gift, that could unite tribes and communities, and to this day, chocolate has endured as a mainstay in the realm of romance. Whether it's suggestively pouring from a fondu on an early, nervous date, or night dwelling on a pillow in a honeymoon suite, or even entertaining the erotic land in ways too despicable, and brilliant for me to describe here. Chocolate therefore, and the multi-sensory, romantic experience linked to it, is far more than a quick, sweet treat between petrol pumps. The one other food area where ceremony, history and ritual play such a vital part, is Meat. Though the two may seem entirely disconnected, I think that meat and chocolate have more in common than you might think. Both not only stem from ceremonial, and religious ritual, but also prestige and exclusivity; on a taste level, the quality of meat is quite often compared to how 'Melt In The Mouth' it can be, which is also one of the fundamentals of how we discuss good chocolate - its pleasant disintegration on the tongue. In addition to this, when cooked, beef even gives off a sweet, and chocolatey aroma. What both meat and chocolate really have in common is that they both have to be 'reared' through an arduous, time honoured, and intensely rarefied process. The presence of 'Master Chocolatiers' in modern choccy advertisements is not a million miles away from the onus put on avuncular, authoritative 'Family' butchers in the promotion of meat products.

By nature of its own history in conjunction with our own human evolution, chocolate has managed to transcend its role simply as a source of food. Instead, like few other products (e.g Milk and its role in the birth/life cycle, or perhaps even the single apple as biblical relic and key to the explanation of gravity) Chocolate has become part of the connective tissue that binds us to our history, and our planet. In a fast moving world, with a heavy burden placed on the constant acquisition of new, fresh faced material goods (along with the obsolescence of old ones) it is increasingly rare that we humans can have a relationship with any one thing, for that long. Especially a relationship that has lasted practically as long as all of human history. It is also rare, in the age of Instagram distraction,



endless technological innovation, and indecipherable fake news, for a single product to hold on to its original, intended meaning.

It seems to me that in any one moment, or sitting, or purchase, or meal, at any gas station, corner shop, momentary spark of connection or hint of desperation; whether it's wrapped, or melted, or baked, sitting simply in a square, or melting away in a coat pocket, Chocolate can become a perfect embodiment of human endurance, comfort, healing, grief, history, and most of all, love.

Response.

The idea of this essay was simply to go right back to basics, to the start, and explore the symbolic meaning at the very core of the thing we have been talking about with this project. By thinking imaginatively about the history of Chocolate we can hopefully start to stir some ideas about how best to start thinking about its role in the present. The attached visual is an Aztec painting that depicts a 'Cacao Ceremony'.

