

The internet told me that I was like a shark

Selena Knoop

When I am at home, I cease to exist. I stop serving a function. I stop taking part. Though when I do take part, I do it so brilliantly. As long as I am away, I feel in charge, or at least something is in charge that feels like a positive thing, like a thing that should be. When there is movement, the thoughts are flowing, traversing swiftly from one to another instead of crashing into each other and missing the exit. And in it there is a moment of possibility, a fluttering sign of animation moving through my abdomen. For this moment, a scene where the body listens to me, where I have agency and it is mine. As soon as I am somewhere safe, I will understand. I feel like I will understand.

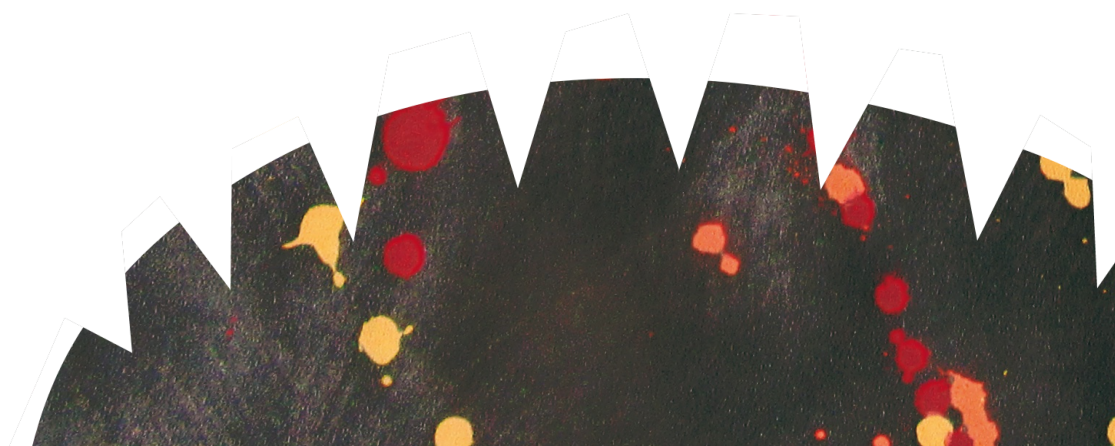
But as I arrive home, the hierarchy topples; I am pushed under, flailing and gasping though never reaching the surface again. Limbs grow heavier and head slows down, telling me to surrender. I notice my body moving, but I am not in control. As I peel away layer by layer, more of myself rips away. I put a scarf on the back of a chair to prove that I recently existed. I know that I will not be able to put it away. The weight of my limbs becomes too much, until I stop. Time is no longer a variable I concern myself with. I am suspended.


When I sit down, my temperature drops. Blood vessels constrict until the flow slows down to a nearly undetectable systolic pressure. Arms are legs and legs are arms.

An invisible ribbon wraps tightly around my chest. The tightness is a reminder that there is life in me still, that there are still nerve endings sending weak electrical signals from one part of my body to another, yet my brain fails to register these signals.

So far, something has always spurred me back into action, but it is not a controlled response. It might not happen next time. There is always the possibility that it might not happen next time.

Can falling apart be useful in the right scenario? Can this state of mind be used to gain some philosophical insight, to get me somewhere I would not get to otherwise? Or am I rendered useless?





Maybe I exist only in relation to other people? No, that can't be right.

How can I ever be safe if it is the home I carry with me that traps me? My own consciousness is letting me down. Existing outside of myself. Existing without a shape and yet turning into a specific shape once again. I mimic this shape by dressing in a large, uninflated balloon that wraps around me like a blanket. I don't think you would recognise me.

A dissonance intensifies between various parts of my brain. Do your frontal lobe and cerebellum fight often? How does it feel to be in control? Can you tell that I wrote this on my sofa? Can you tell anything about me? Can any of this be communicated in a way that makes you feel the way I do?

The internet told me that I was like a shark, and I think it was right. Perhaps a shark would understand me. A shark that needs to move continuously to survive is called an obligate ram ventilator. I learned this while I was underwater. Can falling apart be useful in the right scenario?

Selena Knoop, born in 1996 in Münster and somehow still here, got a BA in English and Anthropology in 2019 and has now been studying Art since 2020 because apparently, after twenty years, they are still not ready to leave school. They have always considered themselves a writer, although they rarely write and absolutely don't share and this is their first time publishing anything. In their spare time they like feeding jackdaws and sitting down for extended periods of time.

