

‘notes on symptoms’ (2020), Alice Gale-Feeny 12'51” HD video and sound (transcript).

(Sound of the underground)

Voice over the train telecom:

“|The next station is...(muffled). Doors will open on the left hand side. Change for circle, Hammersmith and city, Metropolitan and Piccadilly lines, National and International Rail services. The next station has step-free access.”

Radio:

“.....general election, and that means in that sense, we are now living in a very different era. Because we have a government that will be able to do what they want; to be able get their business done in parliament and that too, creates a very different political landscape. Huge opportunities for this government; this relatively new prime minister; huge risks and maybe huge pitfalls too....and no excuses now...”

(Children singing from a building seen above)

Radio:

“Well Laura Kuenssberg and Katya Adler, who have both reported on every twist and turn of that story, both thank you very much. We are out of the E.....(cut off by piano)”

(Piano plays soft melancholic tune)

Alice (close to the mic, speaking slowly, at times slurring slightly):

“It seems that...I’ll have a moment of energy and I’ll start, say, reading aloud from a book. But I’ll be about a page into reading and I’ll get very hot and um, tired. Sort of, sweating. Like the brain just shuts down or something. And um, then I have to stop. So I think about seven minutes is my limit of doing it.”

(Inside plastic cover, a hand finds a hole to look out of and sees a far-off computer with a Zoom video conference call happening. No sound heard)

“I’m sat in the greenhouse now, and maybe it’s a bit too hot in here. Maybe that’s the reason. But it feels more sort of *physical* than that.”

Charlie Kauffman’s voice from a computer off-screen:

“I’ve never delivered a speech before, which is why I decided to do this. I wanted to do something that I don’t know how to do, and offer you the experience of watching someone fumble, because I think maybe that’s what art should offer. An opportunity to recognise our common humanity and vulnerability.

So rather than being up here pretending I'm an expert in anything, or presenting myself in a way that will reinforce the odd, ritualised lecturer-lecturee model, I'm just telling you off the bat that I don't know anything. And if there's one thing that characterises my writing it's that I always start from that realisation and I do what I can to keep reminding myself of that during the process. I think we try to be experts because we're scared; we don't want to feel foolish or worthless; we want power because power is a great disguise."

05:00 minutes

(Piano continues to play tune)

Alice: (speaking slowly, at times slurring slightly):

"I've been looking through these notebooks, where I write down my thoughts or worries, and it's the first time I've had a chance to look through them, possibly in about three years.

And I have a bonfire, and it takes quite a long time to light actually. I'm holding a lighter to the papers, And it suddenly dawns on me that this isn't usually how you make a fire; just purely with pages of notes, no wood or any firelighters. So eventually in the end I get some firelighters, and it goes up in flames very fast. And I'm kind of prodding away at this fire, trying to get it to burn all of the parts of the pages I don't want anyone to see or read.

(Bonfire appears but no sound heard)

And the ash is flying into my hair, and sticking to my coat. But I can't smell anything. So it's like a strange sort of film, playing out in front of me. Where I'm sort of immersed but also, somehow, *out* of the experience."

(Bonfire appears but no sound heard)

07:00 minutes

(Neighbours stand on rubbish to try and get it to fit into the bin, no sound heard)

Karaoke (housemates voices singing part of R.E.M.'s 'Losing My Religion'):

"...I thought that I heard you sing, I think I thought I saw you try..."

(Crunching and folding sound of plastic, a plane passes overhead)

Alice (speaking slowly, at times slurring slightly):

"I am.. chopping an onion in half. And I put one half into the blender, turn it on, and it gets stuck around the blades. So it just looks like a little *dome*, spinning not blending. (Sound of a power drill whirring

interrupts) And it dawns on me that I can't smell the onion at all; I can't smell the garlic on my fingers, even though I'm smushing it into a little grater. (Power drill whirs again) It finally catches my eyes and I start tear-ing up, but there's no taste on my breath. It's like I'm sort of removed from the cooking experience, because of it. The meal actually turns out to be *too* onion-y. And yet I can't taste it, and so for the other three people in the room, who are eating with me, they have the experience, and I'm removed from it."

10:00 minutes

(Sound of bed covers and laughing behind camera)

From an instructional video voice off screen:

"...some push-ups. If you're having trouble with this move, do as many as you can, explosive..(muffled)... push-ups, explosive as you can. And if you're having trouble with those as well, you can always start with explosive knee push-ups, (Alex: yah!) and then move into these push-ups (Alex: no.) Let's start with twenty five...." (Intense ominous music and Alex's breathing)

Karaoke (Alex sings Paul Simon's 'You Can Call Me Al'):

"Where's my wife and family?
What if I die here?
Who'll be my role model
Now that my role model is gone, gone?"

Charlie Kauffman's voice from a computer off-screen:

"It's funny now that I don't want to call myself that, but at the time I did. I think that it was necessary at the time, but now it doesn't feel necessary because I think the thing I realise is: I'm not those things. I'm a person who does this and I struggle with it."

(Outdoor, ducks calling and chasing one another)

Alice:

"I have this sense that I'm over the worst of it now. And I slept for about eleven hours last night, and maybe about two or three in the daytime yesterday. But I find myself kind of curled in a ball on the bed, listening to these recordings that I made of my symptoms when they were a bit worse; when I had even less energy. I'm thinking about acting on thoughts, but I can't quite bring myself to do it. I'm thinking about making notes on something I've just listened to, but instead I just listen to other things, and reply to messages that I haven't been replying to."

Ending Credits