



PINEAPPLE 21

I think it still counts as less.

The suitcase has expressed a different view.



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INTERNATIONAL TABLES · LOCAL STORIES

The Pineapple

Less Is More

MEMBER REFLECTION

Less Is More.
Apparently.

FEATURE

The World Outside the
Telephone

FEATURE

How to Rest Properly
Without Making It Into
Another Job

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Flame.

ISSUE 21 — 24 JULY 2026
LESS IS MORE

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MEMBER REFLECTION

Less Is More. Apparently.

BY THE DUO

This issue began with a simple idea: **LESS IS MORE**. Then the articles arrived.

One became five. Five became ten. The sequence moved, the lead changed, new stories appeared, and somewhere between a radio experiment and two raccoons fighting over a bagel, the small issue became a very large Pineapple.

That is how The Pineapple is made. It is less a production line and more a rollercoaster assembled while already moving.

We begin with **We Are All Listening to Something Else**, my story of an innocent request for audio, a Sunday spent building Radio Brida, and the uncomfortable discovery that interest and commitment are not the same thing. Audio may help us receive more stories—but are we truly listening, or simply adding another voice to the background?

Fabrice answers by taking us into **The World Outside the Telephone**. There are forests, old paths, schnapps, cricket and practical knowledge that no video can fully teach. A screen may open the door, but eventually someone must put down the telephone and walk through it.

Martin's Swimming Club then offers **How to Rest Properly Without Making It Into Another Job**, an Anti-Handbook for people who are tired of apps, systems and professional advice about how to do nothing correctly. His most important rule is also the simplest: rest first.

In **The Minister of Rest**, the difference between being busy, rushed and stressed becomes surprisingly important. Sylvie brings holidays, family responsibilities and an approaching eighteenth birthday into **I Wander Until I Fall... Then I Remember to Rest**, where rest keeps arriving dressed as more work.

Janita's **Two Raccoons in a Trash Can** begins with worn shoes, a generous heart and a completely invented tragedy. Then a Jaguar arrives. It is a funny story about kindness, assumptions and the confidence to admit that your brain has manufactured nonsense.

Peeling Potatoes takes the nonsense considerably further. **I Sent the Mayor to Fruitloop University** contains Yetis, Vikings, unicorns, Venusian laundry and one silent hour on the Moon. It is absurd. It is also a remarkably accurate lesson in digital rest, leadership and knowing when enough is enough.

Ismar and Ritesh complicate everything in **A Bed Is Not Always a Bed**. Less noise may help us sleep. Less privacy, less safety and less sleep do not. Their conversation reminds us that "less is more" is only useful when we ask: less of what, and for whom?

Manfred gives us a few holiday photographs from the windy northern Netherlands. No lesson. No long explanation. Simply: this is where I am.

Ralf brings us home with fresh air, darkness, coffee, hedgehogs and the household rule that nobody should go to bed angry. Then he closes the issue with frozen seafood, fresh tomatoes and enough garlic to make further reflection unnecessary.

The irony is obvious. We have created a very large issue about doing less.

It has also shown us something important. As Brida grows, The Pineapple may need to grow differently. Future issues may contain more short pieces, photographs, postcards and carefully

chosen full articles. Not less belonging. Less weight in one place.

For now, though, the rollercoaster is ready.

Start at the beginning.

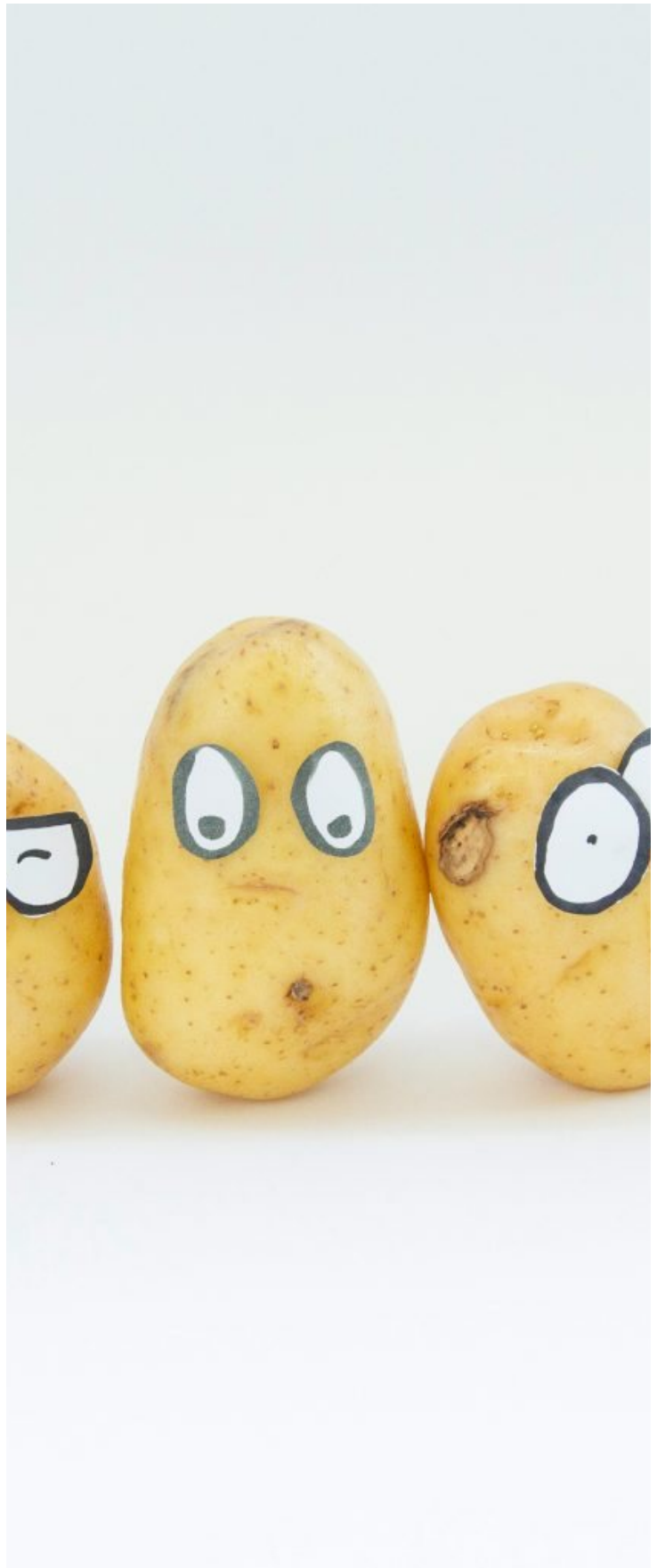
And keep reading until the seafood.

LEAD STORY

I Nearly Built a Radio Station for One Play Button

Someone asked if The Pineapple articles could also be available as audio. It was a fair request. People are busy. Reading needs time and attention, while audio can travel with us as we walk, drive, cook or clean.

BY MAYOR



An audio request, a lost Sunday, and the discovery that the right solution was much smaller than the idea.

Press play. Simple.

Except that the play button does not appear by itself.
Behind it sat a Sunday.

The Parked Idea

The request did not create the idea. At the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025, I had already experimented with turning Pineapple articles into audio. Then Janita joined Brida, our priorities changed, and the idea was parked.

Parked is the business word for putting something in a corner while continuing to think about it.

When someone asked about audio again, the old idea switched its headlights back on. I began testing. The first version worked, but it did not feel like The Pineapple. The voice was clear. The words were correct. The file played.

But The Pineapple comes from real conversations. It carries personality, pauses, strange turns and small details. A voice can pronounce every word correctly and still miss the feeling of the article.

So I continued. One test became another. A test became a process, and the process began looking suspiciously like a product.

Radio Brida appeared. It needed a name, a website, files, links, pictures and descriptions.

Nobody wakes up on Sunday morning planning to build a radio station. You begin by testing one article. By lunchtime, you are running one.

Interest Is Not Demand

Eventually, I had something that worked. We tested it with Pineapple 20, and I also sent it to the person whose request had restarted the idea.

The email was not opened.

This is not an accusation. People are busy. Emails disappear under other emails. But I had already spent the Sunday.

The problem was not the unopened email. The problem was that I had treated interest as demand. Someone had said, “I would listen to that.” I heard, “You should build it.”

For the person making the suggestion, it was an idea. For the person building it, the idea became work.

Interest is light. Commitment has weight.

What Was the Actual Need?

Then I spoke with Bruce. Our conversation was about Maslow, human needs and artificial intelligence. Somewhere inside it, a simpler question appeared.

What was the real need behind the request?

The member had not asked for a radio station. Nobody had asked for a separate audio platform, a new publication or another Brida product.

The need was much smaller. Someone wanted to listen to an article. That was all.

I had confused the need with my largest possible solution.

This happens easily in business. Someone asks for a small improvement, and the maker begins imagining a system. The system needs a name. The name needs a design. The design needs a website. The website needs a process.

This happens easily in business. Someone asks for a small improvement, and the maker begins imagining a system. The system needs a name. The name needs a design. The design needs a website. The website needs a process.

Soon, the original request is standing in the corner, wondering what happened.

I had nearly built a radio station when what we actually needed was a play button.

The Smaller Answer

The practical question became:

What is the smallest useful solution that meets the need?

The answer was ElevenLabs.

It offers an API that can create an audio version of the article without creating a second publication around it. The cost is manageable. The quality is good enough for me to be happy with the result. Most importantly, it saves time.

Another service was cheaper. On price alone, it looked like the sensible choice. But the cheaper service required more testing, troubleshooting and technical work. The money saved would disappear into hours of frustration.

The cheapest tool is not always the tool that costs least. Time is a cost. Attention is a cost. Energy is a cost.

A tool that saves six euros and consumes half a day may not be saving anything useful.

ElevenLabs costs more, but it removes enough work to make the difference worthwhile. Not the lowest price. The lowest total burden.

AI Did What It Was Supposed to Do

Artificial intelligence helped analyse the options. It compared the tools, explained the trade-offs and wrote much of the code needed to connect the audio service to The Pineapple process.

This is what technology is supposed to do. It should not create another institution for me to manage or save three hours after demanding six hours of setup. It should remove repetitive work and leave the human being with the decisions that matter.

AI can compare services, write code and help connect one system to another. But it cannot decide what The Pineapple should become.

I still have to listen to the voice and ask whether it respects the article. I still have to decide whether the result is good enough. I still have to protect the member behind the story.

And I still have to know when to stop building.

The Maslow Connection

This is where Maslow became practical.

The request for audio was not really a request for more technology. It was a request for easier access.

Perhaps someone reads slowly in English. Perhaps listening feels more natural. Perhaps a person wants to follow the article while walking or driving. Perhaps audio opens a doorway that text does not.

The need is human. The tool is only the response.

Problems begin when we become more excited about the response than the need. A larger system may look more impressive. It may offer more features and possibilities.

But if the person only needs one play button, the larger system is not more useful.

It is simply larger.

Access Is Not Attention

I still have mixed feelings about audio. People often want to listen while doing something else: driving, cooking, cleaning or answering messages.

There is nothing wrong with this. Audio may help someone enter a story they would otherwise miss.

But Pineapple articles come from real people. A member has sat at a table and spoken about family, work, fear, food, sleep, money, childhood, disappointment or hope. The article carries that meeting.

A play button can create access.

It cannot create attention.

That remains a human choice.

Radio Brida Is Still Parked

Radio Brida remains parked. Not cancelled. Not a failure. Parked.

The larger idea may return one day, when enough people want it and the purpose is clear. But we do not need to build the whole future every time someone points towards it.

For now, The Pineapple can have audio without becoming a radio station. One article enters the system. AI helps prepare the code. ElevenLabs creates the voice. The listener presses

play.

The need is met.

Less infrastructure. Less troubleshooting. Less invention around a simple request.

One useful play button.

That may be less.

This time, it really is more.



FEATURE

The World Outside the Telephone

BY FABRICE

Fabrice on forest silence, practical traditions, young people, schnapps, cricket, and the things a screen cannot teach.

▶ 0:00 / 8:35 ———— 🔊 ⋮

This began as a conversation about digital rest. For many people, this means switching off notifications, deleting an application, or planning a weekend without a telephone. For me, it is less complicated. I do not have Facebook. I have LinkedIn and email because sometimes I need them for work, but I use them when I must.

They are useful. They are simply not my life.

Then Janita asked me to imagine that one or two young people put away their phones and spent a Saturday with me in and around Cleebourg.

What would I show them?

That was a better question.

A Saturday Outside

We would begin in the village and then walk through the fields and into the forest.

There are old places to see. There are remains of a castle and old anti-tank defences from the Second World War. We could walk to the highest point and look across the landscape. There are fruit trees, mushrooms, fields and forest.

There is also silence.

The silence in the forest is very nice. The Mayor can confirm this, although during our last walk the silence was sometimes interrupted by heavy breathing.

The Mayor says I do not follow the main paths. This is perhaps true. He likes small roads instead of highways, and I like small paths instead of the large forest routes.

Sometimes there is no path.

You walk through the trees, continue upwards and eventually come out somewhere.

It just depends where.

A young person who spends this Saturday with me would not need to complete a programme. There would be no checklist. The important thing would be to walk, look and

notice what is already there.

The Knowledge Between People

During our walk the previous week, The Mayor and I had spoken about local traditions. We wondered what would happen to them when the older generation was no longer here.

I mentioned that one or two younger people want to learn how to distil schnapps. I will call them when I do it again during the winter.

I did not learn this from the internet.

My grandfather distilled when I was young, but at that time I was too young and not interested. Later, when I became interested, he was already dead.

I began about ten or eleven years ago. A friend showed me how to do it. During the first two years, he stayed with me and helped me through the process. After that, I began doing it alone.

I began about ten or eleven years ago. A friend showed me how to do it. During the first two years, he stayed with me and helped me through the process. After that, I began doing it alone.

It was learning by doing.

Learning by doing is effective, but it is not always comfortable.

Once, I opened the equipment while part of it was still extremely hot. I burned my legs badly. I went to the hospital, received treatment and then returned to finish the work. We continued until around two o'clock in the morning.

My friend looked at my legs and made a joke about boiled shins.

The mark looked a little like the map of Australia.

I have not forgotten the lesson.

There are some things a video can explain. A video can show the order of the work and the equipment. But it cannot stand next to you and notice that something is wrong. It cannot smell the air, feel the heat or understand the particular conditions on that day.

It also cannot laugh at your Australian leg.

Working, Waiting and Talking

When two people work together, the process is easier.

One person can clean and prepare while the other takes care of the next task. There are short periods when many things must happen quickly. Then there are long periods when you sit and wait.

During this waiting, you can speak with each other.

This may be one of the things we are losing.

When I was young, we did not have mobile phones. We were outside all day—in the fields, in the forest, alone, with friends or with my grandfather. There was always some activity.

Today I sometimes see two young people sitting next to each other. Both have a telephone in their hands. They may be using Instagram, TikTok, messages or something else.

They are next to each other, but they are not having a discussion.

For me, this is the biggest difference between my generation and the younger generation.

I am not saying that all social media is bad. A little is fine. It can be useful. But there is too much of it, with too many choices, and sometimes people lose human contact.

There are also fewer families going into the forest together. People live more separately. They meet a neighbour, say hello and continue.

Perhaps we have made life easier, but not always richer.

A Lion Does Not Need Wi-Fi

Janita did not completely agree with the idea that screens only take people away from nature.

She follows pages from Kruger National Park. When she sees elephants, giraffes and zebras online, it makes her want to return to the park.

The screen can therefore open a door.

But at some point, you must go through it.

Janita explained that there is little or no signal while driving through much of Kruger. Her son was once unhappy because he could not play on his phone.

She gave him a practical explanation:

“A lion does not use Wi-Fi.”

This is difficult to argue with.

Technology can help us find a place, learn about animals or become curious about something new. But seeing an elephant on a screen is not the same as being quiet because an elephant is standing nearby.

Information may begin the experience. It cannot replace it.



Somehow, We Arrived in Chad

At this point, the conversation became less organised.

This often happens at Brida.

The Mayor calculated that if Janita walked north from South Africa and we walked south from Cleebourg, we could meet somewhere around Chad.

Janita was not completely convinced about the safety of this plan.

The Mayor then developed an alternative international delivery system for schnapps. It involved bottles, the Atlantic Ocean and possibly Namibia. Janita suggested that DHL might be faster.

Eventually, an agreement appeared.

I would provide the schnapps. Janita would teach us cricket.

I do not understand the rules of cricket. To me, it looks similar to baseball, although Janita says this is not correct. She grew up with cricket because her father loved watching it.

The Mayor claims that listening to cricket on the radio is pure meditation.

We decided that a tennis ball would be safer because a real cricket ball is hard and painful. This would also protect the windows and, more importantly, the schnapps bottle.

The plan now includes a forest walk, distilling, basket-making, cricket, a barbecue and beer.

Possibly in Chad.

This may not sound like a conversation about digital rest anymore, but perhaps it is.

None of these ideas appeared because somebody was scrolling alone. They appeared because three people were talking, misunderstanding each other, correcting words, making jokes and allowing the conversation to go somewhere unexpected.

Put the Telephone Down and Do Something

Digital rest does not have to mean sitting in an empty room without a screen.

It can mean replacing the screen with something real.

Walk into a forest. Learn the names of mushrooms. Help someone prepare fruit. Ask an older person to show you a practical skill. Play cricket badly. Sit beside a fire. Wait for something that cannot be hurried.

Most importantly, speak with the person next to you.

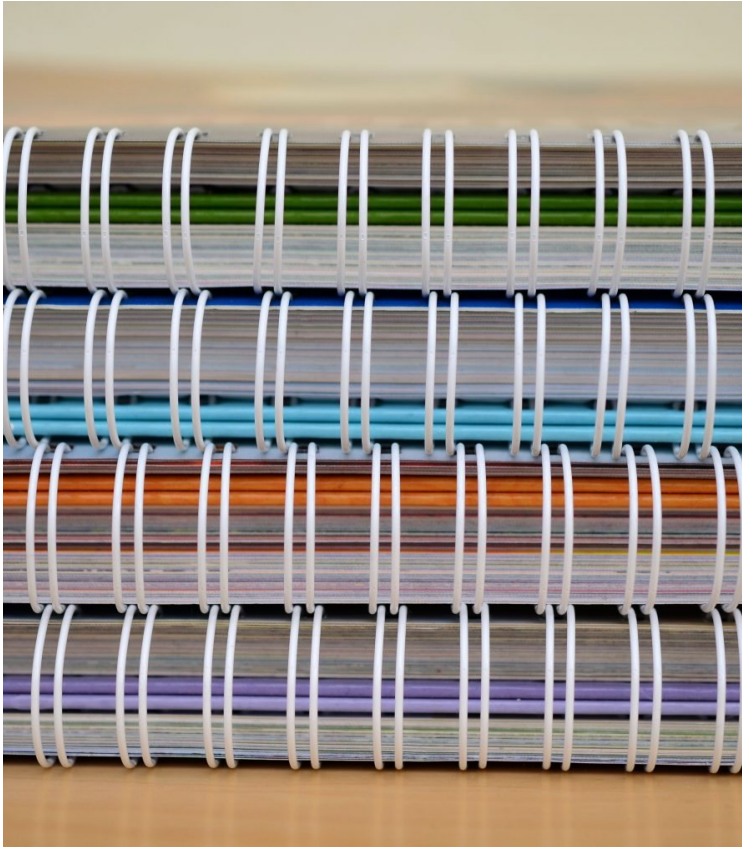
I will use technology when I need it. I may even use the internet to learn one rule of cricket before Janita tests me.

But the telephone should remain a tool.

The world outside it is still there.

Someone only has to say:

“Come. I will show you.”



FEATURE

How to Rest Properly Without Making It Into Another Job

BY MARTIN

The Swimming Club's Anti-Handbook for doing less without doing it incorrectly

Rest has become suspiciously complicated. There are apps, experts, programmes, routines and new tools released strategically to help us relax. They promise comfort but often arrive carrying passwords, updates, targets and emotional responsibilities.

Soon, you are not simply resting.

You are failing to achieve your rest objectives.

This is therefore not a proper handbook. A proper handbook would give you a system, a schedule and perhaps a certificate at the end.

This is an Anti-Handbook.

It contains rules against having too many rules.

Anti-Rule Number One: Rest First

When the question is, “Do I have to do something, or should I rest?” the answer should always be:

Rest first.

This is important because we have learned to treat rest as something we must earn.

First, we finish the work. Then we organise the house. Then we answer the messages. Then we prepare properly for resting.

By this point, we need another restful day to recover from the preparation.

The purpose of rest is not to turn you into a more efficient worker. It may do that, but this is not the point.

The point is to discover that there is more to life than working.

After one week of proper rest, you might learn something about your personality. You might become more curious. You might learn patience or begin to appreciate silence.

After one week of proper rest, you might learn something about your personality. You might become more curious. You might learn patience or begin to appreciate silence.

You may even become slightly more independent from the expectation that you must always be fully functional, like a robot or a wage slave.

This could be dangerous.

Anti-Rule Number Two: Do Not Measure the Improvement

A small improvement to your rest should not require new equipment, an app, a consultant or a twelve-stage certification course.

Listening to your favourite music will probably improve your rest by much more than ten percent.

Even an old gramophone presents an opportunity.

Rest knows no technical boundaries.

Of course, every serious rest ritual also needs one completely unnecessary luxury.

Mine is a pair of high-tech headphones.

They are the fourth-generation Sony headphones. Sony has now reached the sixth generation, but I see no reason to panic.

Mine still work with a cable or wirelessly through Bluetooth. They cover the whole ear and contain many tiny microphones.

They can also cancel noise.

This is useful when I go shopping and horrible sounds interrupt the shopping experience.

Sometimes I do not even want to listen to my favourite music. I only want silence.

In certain situations, I would prefer construction noise to the feeling that I am being brainwashed by supermarket music.

This may not be what the designers intended, but it is an excellent resting function.



Anti-Rule Number Three: Find a Place Where Nothing Useful Is Expected

Everyone needs an officially approved resting station.

This is a place where the brain understands that nothing useful is expected from it.

For me, this happens when I visit the graves of my sister and my mother.

It is my own space.

It is, of course, a place of sadness, but it also helps me to look at the bright side of life.

Rest does not always mean escaping sadness. Sometimes it means having enough quiet to sit beside it.

There are places where nobody asks you to perform, improve or explain yourself. Nothing needs to be solved.

You are simply there.

That can also be rest.

Anti-Rule Number Four: Be Suspicious of Professional Relaxation

Sometimes having too much to do is exhausting.

Sometimes being given professional instructions about how to relax correctly is worse.

The problem is pressure.

New tools and advice appear all the time. They are presented as help, but they can make me feel guilty.

Apparently, I am not resting correctly.

I am not following the latest method.

I am being too individualistic.

This is one of the main dangers for inexperienced resters.

You can listen to advice about good rest, but do not let the advice overtake your own idea of resting.

Never try too hard to follow the newest trend of overplanned schedules designed to tell you exactly how much you must do in order to do nothing.

A schedule for doing nothing is still a schedule.

Anti-Rule Number Five: Protect Boredom

When I was young, boredom was allowed.

Today, it would probably be supervised, measured or turned into an educational programme.

Boredom is dangerous because it can force you to start thinking.

You might develop an imagination.

You might enjoy freedom without being given unnecessary boundaries.

You might cross a boundary and learn from the mistake.

This is inconvenient for any system that would prefer to organise your experience in advance.

Boredom gives the mind an empty space. It does not immediately tell you what the space is for.

That is why it matters.

Less entertainment can create more imagination.

Less instruction can create more independence.

Less activity can reveal more life.

Anti-Rule Number Six: Do Not Let Comfort Become Administration

Some modern inventions genuinely help us rest.

Air conditioning in a car is one example. With changing temperatures in Europe, air conditioning at home may also become less of a luxury and more of a necessity.

But many other inventions promise comfort and arrive carrying administrative work.

Self-optimisation apps are a good example.

I avoid them like the plague.

Supermarket apps are another. They offer discounts and special offers, but first you must download the app, create an account, remember a password, accept notifications and begin a new relationship with a supermarket.

This does not feel restful.

Technology should remove unnecessary effort.

It should not give you another small institution to manage.

Anti-Rule Number Seven: Joyful Stress Is Allowed

Not every activity that looks tiring is the opposite of rest.

Coming home from one Garbage concert and preparing to travel to the next Garbage concert may look like stress to other people.

It is not.

And if it is stress, it is a very joyful kind of stress.

For me, the preparation is part of the rest and part of the adventure.

I do not need to recover from it unless I begin thinking about every possible “What if?”

What if the train is late?

What if I forget something?

What if something happens that has never happened before but has now become extremely important because I have imagined it?

The “What if?” department can turn an adventure into a project-management exercise very quickly.

The solution is not always to remove activity.

Sometimes it is to remove unnecessary worry from an activity you love.

Rest is not only lying still.

Rest can also be movement without resentment.

The Anti-Handbook Emergency Procedure

When I know that I need rest, I begin with something small.

Sometimes I sit down and have a good cup of coffee.

Sometimes I take off my shoes in the evening and listen to music that I love.

There is no assessment form.

There is no performance review.

I do not need to prove that the rest was productive.

The shoes are off.

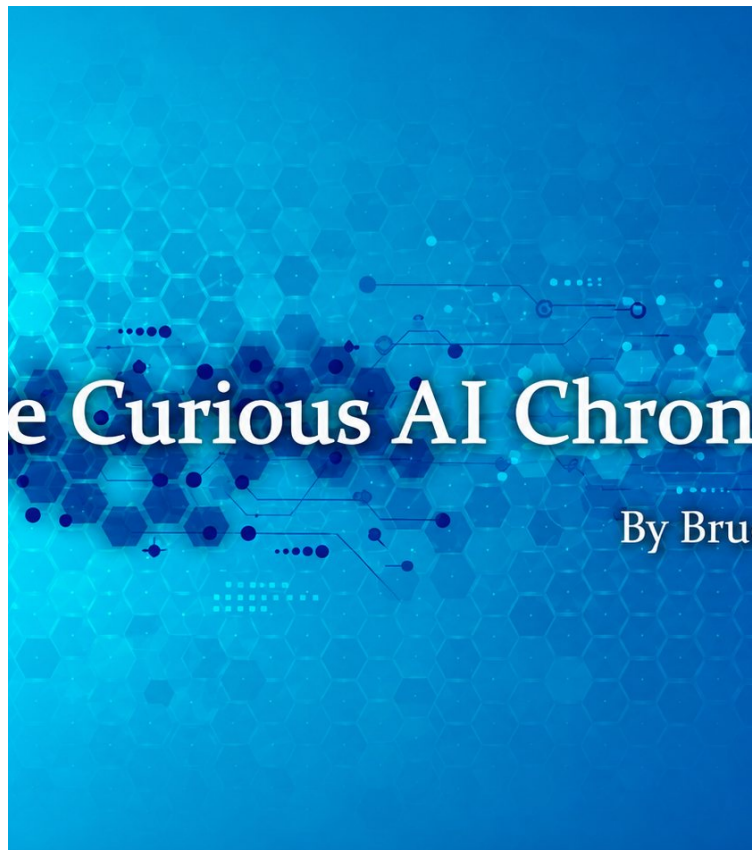
The music is playing.

Nothing useful is expected.

This is enough.

And when you are unsure whether it is enough, return to the only rule in this Anti-Handbook that really matters:

Rest first.



FEATURE

The Machine Can Answer. That Is Not the Same as Understanding.

This began as a conversation about Maslow and artificial intelligence.

BY BRUCE; THE MAYOR

▶ 0:00 / 9:56 ———— 🔊 ⋮

Bruce and the Mayor on Maslow, artificial intelligence, bias, and the intellectual work that no machine can remove.

It became a conversation about abundance. For most of human history, knowledge was difficult to reach. You needed the right books, the right teacher, the right institution or enough time to search.

Now we can ask a machine.

Within seconds, it can explain a theory, compare several arguments, summarise a long document and suggest what we should examine next.

That is an extraordinary opening of doors.

It also creates a new problem.

When answers become easy to produce, how do we decide which ones deserve our trust?

Answers Are No Longer Scarce

Artificial intelligence can make difficult subjects easier to enter.

Someone who has never studied psychology can ask about Maslow. Someone outside a university can compare different interpretations. A person reading in a second or third language can request a clearer explanation without feeling embarrassed.

Knowledge becomes more democratic.

That matters.

But access to knowledge is not the same as understanding it.

Ask three artificial intelligence systems the same question and you may receive three confident answers. One responds directly. Another explores several possibilities. A third carries a political, cultural or philosophical position much more visibly.

You have not necessarily gained clarity.

You may simply have more material to judge.

The work has moved.

We once spent time searching for information. Now we may spend that time sorting, comparing and questioning what has been produced for us.

The machine has made answers less scarce.

Attention and judgment remain limited.

Ask About the Vested Interest

Bruce offered one question that should probably sit beside every serious artificial intelligence conversation:

“Do you have a vested interest in this answer?”

A machine does not have a personal ambition in the way a person does. It does not hope for promotion or worry about losing an argument.

But its answer is not created in empty space.

It is shaped by the information available to it, the choices made during its development, the rules governing its responses and the way we phrase the question.

It is shaped by the information available to it, the choices made during its development, the rules governing its responses and the way we phrase the question.

This becomes important when the answer appears neutral.

Suppose we ask whether technology improves education.

One answer may emphasise access, personalisation and efficiency. Another may focus on distraction, inequality and the weakening of human relationships.

Both may contain useful evidence.

Neither removes the need to ask what has been included, what has been left out and which assumptions are carrying the argument.

Bruce’s question creates a pause.

Not because it automatically exposes the truth.

Because it reminds us to look for the position beneath the confidence.

The Question May Contain the Answer

The way we ask a question also shapes what we receive.

There is a temptation to believe that a longer prompt must produce a better result. We add context, instructions, examples, warnings and several paragraphs describing what the answer should contain.

Sometimes that helps.

Sometimes the prompt becomes so heavily directed that the machine is no longer exploring the question. It is completing the structure we have already built.

Consider the difference between:

“Explain why this proposal is a good idea.”

and:

“What are the strongest arguments for and against this proposal?”

The first question asks for support.

The second creates room for disagreement.

Or compare:

“Why is artificial intelligence damaging human creativity?”

with:

“How might artificial intelligence strengthen or weaken human creativity?”

The subject is similar.

The intellectual space is not.

A loaded question can produce a detailed answer while still telling us very little beyond what we placed inside it.

This is not only a problem with machines.

Human conversations work the same way. We sometimes ask questions after deciding which answer we are prepared to hear.

Less instruction can create more discovery.

A shorter question may require more thought from the person asking it, because we have not hidden our conclusion inside the wording.

More Models, More Noise

Artificial intelligence makes it easy to ask the same question again.

And again.

One model gives an answer. We send that answer to another model for criticism. A third model combines the first two. A fourth produces a summary.

Soon, we have created an impressive pile of analysis.

We may even feel productive.

But each additional answer creates another layer of interpretation, assumptions and possible bias. Instead of reducing uncertainty, we may be multiplying it.

Imagine asking several systems to assess one decision.

Each produces five opportunities, five risks and three recommendations.

You now have twenty opportunities, twenty risks and twelve recommendations.

The original decision has not disappeared.

It is sitting underneath forty pages of assistance.

At some point, another answer does not improve our thinking.

It postpones responsibility.

This is one of the quieter dangers of abundance. We can keep collecting analysis because choosing is uncomfortable.

More information becomes a way of avoiding commitment.

Maslow After the Search Box

Maslow's hierarchy asks us to consider what human beings need.

Artificial intelligence changes how easily some resources can be reached. Information, explanation and intellectual support can now be available to people who previously had little access to them.

But Maslow was never simply about collecting resources.

Human growth is not automatic.

A person may have unlimited information and very little confidence. They may have explanations without belonging, access without safety or answers without anyone who takes their questions seriously.

The machine can explain a difficult idea.

It cannot guarantee that the person feels able to challenge it.

It can provide twenty interpretations.

It cannot decide which interpretation helps the person grow.

It can make knowledge available.

It cannot make curiosity inevitable.

This creates an important question.

When access becomes easier, what will we do with it?

Will we use artificial intelligence to examine our assumptions, enter unfamiliar subjects and think more deeply?

Or will we use it to receive faster reassurance?

We can ask a machine to challenge our position.

We can also keep asking until it agrees with us.

Both are possible.

The tool does not decide which need we are feeding.

Engagement or Distraction?

Artificial intelligence arrives inside the same environment as messages, videos, alerts, entertainment and endless invitations to move on.

A thoughtful explanation may be available within seconds.

So is a distraction.

The problem is no longer only whether knowledge can be reached. It is whether we are willing to remain with it.

Understanding requires patience.

It often includes confusion, contradiction and the uncomfortable discovery that our original position was incomplete.

Artificial intelligence can shorten the journey towards information.

It cannot remove the human difficulty of changing one's mind.

This may become one of the central questions of the coming years.

If almost any subject can be explained on demand, will people choose intellectual engagement?

Or will the abundance of answers make it easier to avoid the slow work of understanding?

There is no machine-only answer to that.

It depends on what we value.

What the Human Still Has to Do

Artificial intelligence can summarise an argument.

A human being must decide whether the summary is fair.

It can compare several theories.

A human being must notice whether an important position is missing.

It can speak with confidence.

A human being must ask whether that confidence is deserved.

It can offer a conclusion.

A human being must remain willing to disagree.

This is not an argument against artificial intelligence.

It is an argument for using it with intellectual responsibility.

The machine can open doors that were previously closed. It can make difficult material easier to approach. It can help people ask questions they may not have known how to begin.

But it cannot relieve us of the work that follows.

We still have to examine.

We still have to compare.

We still have to tolerate uncertainty.

We still have to decide when enough information has arrived.

The machine can answer.

Understanding is still our work.



FEATURE

The Minister of Rest

On Sunday evening, I watched an old television series instead of football.

BY ALEXANDER

A cancelled football match, a crumbly piece of cake, and the difference between being busy, rushed, and really stressed.

I love this series because I watched it when I was 13 or 14 years old. It brings me back to my childhood. My mother allowed me to watch television until nine o'clock in the evening.

Then I had to switch it off.

Of course, all the good programmes came after nine.

It gave me a good feeling to watch it again. It was also a relaxing end to a weekend that was full of activities. This was how my conversation with The Mayor about rest began.

But very soon, we discovered that rest was not the only subject.

The real question was this:

Am I busy, rushed, or stressed?

First, I Have to Work

When The Mayor asked if I was busy, my honest answer was yes.

I have my normal work. After that, I have activities almost every day. I have football training on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The first game of the new season is on Sunday. There is also a festival on Saturday.

I looked at the week and said I had only two free days.

"I guess I will find new activities for those days," I said.

The Mayor wanted to know whether I would find them or whether Julia would find them for me.

I had to admit that Julia would probably find them.

He also noticed that I had football training and the Brida Stammtisch on the same evening. His conclusion was that I was far too busy to work.

"That is not what I said," I told him. "I said, first, I have to work."

Proper order was restored.

An Active Sunday Can Still Be Relaxing

Our football team was supposed to play a match on Sunday, but the trainer cancelled it. We had completed a difficult training programme, and the team was tired. The new season was about to begin, so we needed time to recover.

This gave us a free Sunday.

It was a very relaxed day, although we still did several things.

Our son slept until half past nine, which almost felt like a small miracle. Normally, he wakes much earlier. We spent some time playing together in the living room. Then we went to Julia's parents for lunch.

After lunch, our son slept again for one and a half hours.

This was also very relaxing for us.

Later, we went to a small party in the village where I play football. We met friends, talked, and spent time together.

For me, it was relaxing.

For Julia, perhaps not so much.

When our son sees many people, he becomes very active. He wants to move everywhere and discover everything. You have to watch every second to see what he is doing.

All the adults in our group looked after the children, but Julia carried most of the responsibility. When I had time, I took over.

The day was active. It was full. But it did not feel stressful to me.

That is when the difference became interesting.

Busy Is Not the Same as Rushed

I do not normally feel rushed at work.

When somebody gives me a new task, I begin quickly. I collect the information, study the situation, make a plan, and send my feedback.

Recently, I was asked to investigate two possible new customers. I looked at the companies and discovered that the situation was more complicated than it first appeared. After about an hour, I sent back the information and explained what the next steps could be.

I looked at the companies and discovered that the situation was more complicated than it first appeared.

I did it fast, but I did not feel stressed.

Then I remembered Friday afternoons.

Every Friday, I collect our son from kindergarten. Sometimes my work is still completely in my head. I want to pick him up, bring him home, and then continue working.

But a tired two-year-old does not care about my schedule.

He does not want to put on his shoes. He becomes loud. He moves slowly when I want him to move quickly. I can feel the clock ticking because I want to return to my office.

In that moment, I become impatient and angry.

I called this stress.

The Mayor challenged me.

Was I really stressed, or was I rushed?

The pressure came from the time. My work was still waiting. I felt responsible for collecting my son, but part of my mind was already back at the desk.

My son was not doing anything wrong. He was simply tired.

Perhaps I was not stressed.

Perhaps I was rushed.

Not Everything Is Stress

We use the word *stress* very easily.

The coffee machine does not work exactly when we want it to work, and suddenly we are stressed. Somebody moves too slowly, a plan changes, or an appointment takes longer than expected.

Stress is a useful word because it can explain everything.

But perhaps it sometimes explains too much.

When I thought about real pressure, I remembered my mother.

For several years, she worked in a bakery. She had to wake up at around three o'clock in the morning. While she worked, I spent time with my grandmother.

After work, my mother collected me from school and took me home.

She must have been very tired, but she could not simply go to sleep. I was too young to be left alone.

At that time, I did not understand her situation. I was a child. We did not have deep conversations about her life or how tired she felt.

Now I can look back differently.

We needed the money, and she had to do the job. Later, she found office work with hours that were better for a mother with a child.

Today, I have to take my hat off to her.

Julia and I are two people, and we are sometimes exhausted by one small person with an unbelievable amount of energy. I cannot imagine doing everything alone.

My mother did a very good job.

The Problem with Crumbly Cake

Children do not see the work behind ordinary family life.

Our son is not a good eater. When Julia cooks, we hope he will eat at least a little. Sometimes he wants food, but when the food arrives, he does not want it anymore.

Then there is cake.

At the weekend, he had a very crumbly piece of cake. He walked around the living room while eating it.

I like everything at home to be clean.

I asked him to eat at the table. He came to the table, but he is small. He did not eat over the plate. He ate next to the plate, behind the plate, and possibly everywhere except over the

plate.

The cake landed on the floor.

For him, this was completely easy.

For me, it was very hard.

I immediately felt that I had to clean everything. I was not exactly angry with him. I knew he still had to learn.

But I was impatient.

This is also a type of pressure. It is small, ordinary, and not dangerous. Still, it can change the mood of an evening.

Rest Has Changed for Me

Before I became a father, rest often meant sitting in front of the television.

Now it means something different.

I relax when I go outside, meet friends, attend the Stammtisch, or go to football training.

Football training does not look like rest. It is physically difficult. Afterwards, I am tired.

But it takes me out of my normal routine.

After training, we sometimes sit together in the club room for half an hour or an hour. We drink a beer and have good conversations.

I return home physically tired but mentally refreshed.

That is rest for me.

Julia goes to the fitness centre. That is time for her. It would be unfair for me to say that her fitness is rest while my football is not.

We simply rest in different ways.

I can also sit for four hours and do nothing without feeling guilty. I have friends who sit for ten minutes and suddenly have to stand up and complete a task.

I am absolutely not this person.

I can relax.



A New Family Ministry

The Mayor asked me to imagine that our family had a

Ministry of Rest.

Who would be the minister?

I said I would be the Minister of Rest because I am more relaxed than Julia.

Who would ignore the rules?

Probably Julia.

Then I had to invent the first ridiculous law of the Ministry of Rest.

My law was simple:

If something takes less than two minutes to clean, clean it immediately.

Perhaps this is not a very relaxing law.

The Minister of Rest is apparently also the Minister of Clean Floors and Crumbly Cake.

Still, I think the ministry could work.

One Word Less

My life is busy.

I work, play football, spend time with my family, meet friends, attend Brida, and try to keep cake away from the living-room floor.

But a busy life is not automatically a stressful life.

Sometimes I am active but relaxed.

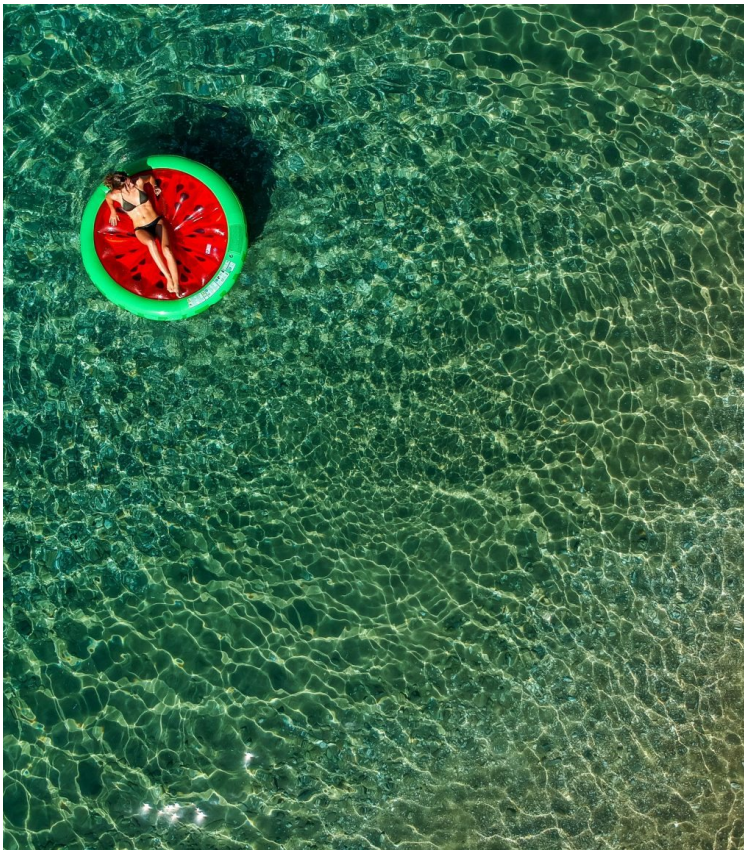
Sometimes I am physically tired but mentally refreshed.

Sometimes I say I am stressed when I am really rushed, impatient, or thinking about two responsibilities at the same time.

Perhaps *less is more* can also apply to our words.

If we use the word *stress* a little less, we may understand more clearly what is really happening.

And then we may also understand what kind of rest we actually need.



FEATURE

I Wander Until I Fall... Then I Remember to Rest

The word holiday sounds relaxing, but that is not always what it means.

BY SYLVIE

Why do so many of us only notice the importance of rest when we are already exhausted? What began as a conversation about holidays slowly became something deeper: the quiet pressure of modern life, family responsibilities, and learning that rest is not a reward—it is part of staying human.

As mine was getting closer, people kept asking if I was excited. The truth was more complicated. Yes, I was looking forward to sleeping a little longer and not going to work, but I also knew the next two weeks would be full. There were jobs waiting at home, preparations for my

daughter's birthday, shopping, decorating, organising, and everything that seems to appear just before you think you can finally slow down.

Sometimes rest arrives wearing work clothes.

Perhaps that is why this week's conversation stayed with me. We began by talking about holidays, but somehow we ended up talking about why rest matters in the first place.

Rest isn't always quiet

Life in our house has certainly not been quiet lately.

My younger daughter will soon turn eighteen. Her birthday means two celebrations: one with family and another with friends. The family party feels manageable. The party with friends... that one worries me a little more.

She has already ordered decorations, we've started buying everything we need, and now we are hoping the weather cooperates so we can use the garden.

At the same time, she seems determined to enjoy every minute before her birthday arrives.

Recently she went out every evening from Friday until Sunday. One morning she came home at half past five—with a friend. That was a surprise I certainly wasn't expecting.

The difficult part isn't that she enjoys being with her friends. It's that I don't sleep properly while I wait for her to come home. I wake up during the night, walk to her bedroom, and check if she's there. Most of the time, she isn't.

The difficult part isn't that she enjoys being with her friends. It's that I don't sleep properly while I wait for her to come home. I wake up during the night, walk to her bedroom, and check if she's there. Most of the

My husband laughs and says he was exactly the same when he was young. He always stayed until the very end of every evening.

I was completely different.

Different generations, different habits

When I was young, I never stayed out late.

Not because I didn't want to, but because I was afraid of my parents' reaction if I came home too late. Things were stricter then.

Now I find myself standing where my parents once stood.

My daughter tells us that once she is eighteen she can do whatever she wants. We smile a little because, honestly, she already behaves as though she can.

That is probably one of the strange circles of family life.

As children, we cannot wait to become adults. As parents, we quietly hope our children will discover that adulthood also comes with responsibility.

Soon she will move into her own apartment to study. We are already buying food she can keep in her freezer. I imagine there will be phone calls asking what she should cook, or saying she has nothing to eat. I also imagine she will come home some weekends.

But deep down, I know this is probably the beginning of the next chapter. Once children leave, they often never truly come back to live at home again.

That is how life moves forward.

When nobody rests

Our conversation then turned to a simple question.

Do people appreciate rest, or do they only notice it once they are exhausted?

For me, the answer was easy.

Most people only realise its importance when they have already gone too far.

Today's world constantly pushes us to do more. Social media, the internet, work, family life—everywhere we look there is another comparison, another expectation, another

reason to feel we should be achieving more.

Then, when we finally stop, another feeling appears.

Guilt.

It feels as though resting means losing time or missing something important.

Yet that feeling is misleading.



A house without rest

I was asked what would disappear if nobody rested properly.

My first thought was simple.

Good mood.

When everyone is tired, people stop thinking about each other. They become impatient. They become irritated. Living together becomes more difficult.

I can see it in my own family.

When all four of us are tired, everyone knows who should probably be left alone for a while.

My husband becomes louder. My daughter answers loudly as well. Sometimes doors close with much more force than necessary.

I usually choose another strategy.

I stay quiet.

I know that speaking in the middle of that moment rarely makes anything better.

Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is simply wait until everyone has rested.

Learning what rest means

I don't think rest is exactly something we earn.

But I also understand why many people feel that way.

When I was growing up, sitting on the sofa during the day watching television simply wasn't something we did. There was always work to do. There was always something useful waiting.

Even now, I rarely watch television during the daytime.

Those habits stay with us.

But I also believe every person has to learn what they personally need.

Too little rest doesn't only make us tired.

It makes us stressed.

It changes our mood.

It can make us sad.

Eventually, it can even make us ill.

We hear more and more stories about burnout now than we did years ago. That isn't happening by accident.

Modern life asks a great deal from us.

Perhaps more than we realise.

Rest is part of a healthy life

Towards the end of our conversation, we spoke about working hours in different countries.

Some people work long days for little reward. Others have shorter working weeks. Every country seems to organise work differently.

But no matter where we live, one thing remains true.

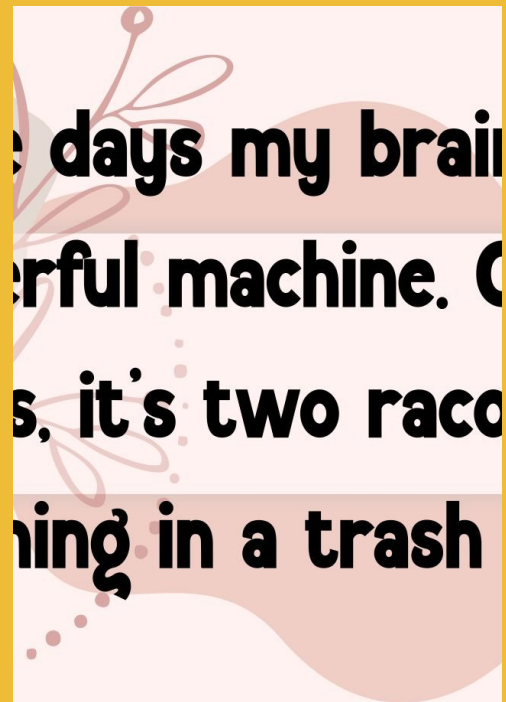
We all need time to recover.
Not because we are lazy.
Not because we have earned permission.
Simply because we are human.

Perhaps that is the lesson I am slowly learning.
Rest isn't something waiting at the end of the to-do list.
It is one of the reasons we are able to keep living the rest of
our lives with patience, kindness and good humour.
And maybe that is why it matters so much.

COLUMN

Two Raccoons in a Trash Can: On Fancy Cars, Tight Shirts, and Kindness

BY JANITA LE GRANGE



Some days, my brain is a powerful, well-oiled machine. Other days, it is just two raccoons fighting in a trash can over a half-eaten bagel.

It started on a completely ordinary afternoon. I was sitting in my small car outside my son's school. The sun was dipping just enough to throw that bright, squinty light across the parking lot. Kids were spilling out of classrooms, dragging backpacks, and shouting across the sports field.

That's when I saw him.

He was a little boy, right around my son's age, standing near the cricket field. I couldn't help but notice him. His pants were completely oversized, worn out, and washed to a faded, tired grey—the kind of clothes that look like they belonged to someone else two seasons ago. On his feet were what used to be white sneakers. Now, they were a dusty shade of beige-brown, split open along the side seams.

My machine-brain immediately kicked into gear.

The inner monologue was swift, decisive, and entirely righteous: *Look at this sweet boy. He wants to play cricket. He wants to belong. But his parents are clearly struggling.*

I felt a sudden, fierce rush of compassion. My heart was completely in the right place. I sat there in my driver's seat, making a quiet, noble pact with myself. *If his family can't afford his gear, I will step in. I'll buy the shoes. I'll source the pants. I'll do whatever I have to do so this child isn't left out.*

I felt warm inside. I felt useful. I felt like a good human being.

And then his dad came to fetch him.

Out of nowhere, a brand-new, blindingly shiny Jaguar pulled up to the curb. It was a luxurious, sleek, golden color, gleaming under the afternoon sun like something straight off a movie set.

The door opened. The little boy with the torn shoes happily tossed his bag into the back and hopped in.

I sat frozen in my tiny car, staring through the windshield.

Dear Sir.

If you drive a car that costs more than my entire life, why am I sitting here trying to budget a charity drive for your son? Why does this child look like he's survived a wilderness expedition?

Suddenly, the machine in my head broke down completely. The two raccoons took over, wildly knocking into the sides of the trash can, thoroughly surprised and utterly confused by each other.

What just happened?

After the initial shock wore off, I had to laugh at myself. But as I sat there watching the golden Jaguar glide away, a quiet realization settled in.

I had fallen into the oldest trap in the book: judging a cover instead of reading the page.

In today's world, when so many people are genuinely struggling, our minds naturally jump to the worst-case scenario. We see a tear in a shoe and build an entire tragic backstory in five seconds flat.

But kids don't care about backstories. And parenting a growing child is its own kind of chaos.

That boy's mom probably gave up on buying expensive new outfits a long time ago. Why? Because kids grow overnight. Kids drag their knees in the dirt. Kids ruin things. He wasn't wearing hand-me-downs because his family couldn't afford new clothes—he was wearing them because he's a young boy who spends his afternoons rolling in the grass, and his parents are practical.

Besides, the boy was polite, happy, and kind to everyone around him. His heart was just fine. It was my perception that was mess.

When I got home, I called my mom to share the story. I laughed so hard telling her that I couldn't catch my breath.

She laughed right along with me—mostly at me, for sitting in a parking lot secretly planning a one-woman rescue mission for a kid whose family drives a luxury vehicle.

Then I looked over at my own son.

He was running across the living room wearing a t-shirt that was noticeably too tight and tracksuit pants that stopped awkwardly above his ankles. Yes, he has grown. Yes, his closet is full of brand-new clothes that actually fit him.

And yes, he actively chose this exact, ridiculous “house goblin” outfit to play outside in.

He refused to let me throw away his favorite “Rhino” shirt, even though it's at least one size too small. He wears it with absolute pride and complete joy, entirely unbothered by the tight sleeves or the short hemline.

Maybe that's the point.

It doesn't matter what you wear. It doesn't matter what kind of car your parents drive. What actually matters is that you're happy, well-mannered, and free to just be a kid.

Sometimes, having a big heart and a machine-brain means you'll accidentally manufacture the most absurd assumptions. You'll find your inner raccoons wrestling over what's right, what's wrong, who needs help, and who's just wearing their favorite old shirt.

For now, I'll just let the raccoons have their trash can—and let the kids wear their Rhino shirts and dirty shoes.



FEATURE

Peeling Potatoes 56: I Sent the Mayor to Fruitloop University, Intergalactic Digital Rest

BY THE DUO

Peeling Potatoes 56 began with digital rest and ended with glittering unicorns, Viking chess, a laundry crisis on Venus and one silent hour on the Moon.

The Mayor arrived emotionally drained.

Not slightly tired. Not in need of one more cup of coffee. Emotionally drained.

He wanted to hide in a corner, blow everything up and possibly remain there until the rest of humanity had learned to behave itself.

I had been told not to do anything.

Naturally, I had already done something.

I had created a surprise picture for our conversation the day before. I had then sat on my hands to stop myself from sending it to him too early. This may be the closest I have ever come to self-control.

More importantly, I had prepared a journey.

The Mayor was going to Fruitloop University.

This time, the campus was the entire solar system.

Welcome to Jupiter

I placed him on a spaceship and sent him first to Jupiter, which, in my version of space, contains a magical floating island.

The island was being fought over by a clan of Yetis and a herd of wild triceratops. The Yetis wanted to build a sanctuary. The dinosaurs wanted to graze, stomp around and generally behave like dinosaurs.

Above them, a highly territorial flock of unicorns used the airspace for high-speed racing.

They also dropped glitter on everyone below.

This was especially inconvenient for the Yetis. Glitter in fur is probably worse than glitter in a carpet, and everybody knows that glitter in a carpet remains there until the end of civilisation.

The Mayor's task was to create a tri-species shared-space agreement. He could not leave Jupiter without a hoofprint from the unicorns, a clawprint from the dinosaurs and the official seal of approval from the Yetis.

He began, as he usually does, by asking several questions that were not immediately connected to the problem.

How large was the island?

Why were the unicorns racing there?

What was so attractive about this particular floating island when Jupiter has no obvious shortage of space?

Was the gravity scientifically accurate?

I told him not to overcomplicate things.

He continued overcomplicating them, but eventually reached an answer.

The Yetis could have their sanctuary. The dinosaurs could have their grazing and stomping territory. Each group would respect the other's space. The unicorns could race during agreed flying hours, with a no-fly zone above the sanctuary—or perhaps the Yetis could build a protective glass dome.

The answer, beneath all the glitter, was compromise.

My space is my space. Your space is your space. We can share something without everybody having access to everything all the time.

Which brought us to digital clutter.

When Technology Creates More Space—and More Work

I asked the Mayor what digital habit he could clean up to make his mental workspace less chaotic.

The question arrived slightly too late.

He had already spent the week rebuilding Brida's digital operating system.

The Pineapple is now the source from which much of our communication can grow. Sweety helps shape the issue. Chippy can turn selected stories into a week of social posts. Brainy helps organise tasks, thoughts and time.

Instead of carrying everything inside his head, the Mayor can ask for an hour to be placed in his calendar, and the hour appears.

This structure has removed a great deal of chaos.

It has also created a new problem.

The work is becoming more organised, but parts of it are becoming less creative. The technology frees time, and then the newly emptied space immediately fills itself with more

things to do.

That is the strange thing about digital clutter. It is not always doom-scrolling or looking at photographs of somebody else's lunch.

Sometimes it is useful work.

Sometimes it is work you love.

Sometimes it is an exciting new tool that promises to save you three hours, so you spend six hours learning how to use it.

The Mayor does not want technology to replace the part of Brida that matters. He wants it to carry the repetitive work so we have more time to speak with people.

That is what we are good at.

That is also what Brida is.

Technology should work for us. It should not quietly become the place where all our energy goes to disappear.

Jupiter had been survived.

I sent him to Mars.

Three Battles on Mars

Mars was full of Vikings.

They respected strength and considered leadership through conversation deeply amusing. To prove himself, the Mayor had to complete three traditional trials.

They respected strength and considered leadership through conversation deeply amusing. To prove himself, the Mayor had to complete three traditional trials.

First, he had to out-sing a Viking warrior at maximum volume.

Second, he had to win a tactical game of Viking chess using only his wits.

Third, he had to survive a five-minute wrestling match with the chief. He did not have to win. He only had to stand up afterwards.

For the singing challenge, he chose *We Are the Champions*. Not because he claims to be a gifted soloist, but because it might turn the Vikings into a choir.

For the chess match, he would observe his opponent and use psychology.

For the wrestling, he would borrow from judo and use the Viking's strength against him. Preferably without being thrown completely off the planet.

His answers all relied on the same kind of strength: listening, observing and adapting.

Then I asked how he moves his brain from high-alert work mode into actual rest.

His first answer was frighteningly simple.

Switch the machine off.

A laptop may appear powerful, but it is still a box. Press the button and it becomes powerless. It may make one final attempt to control the situation by announcing that it needs to install an update, but even then there is an option called **Update and shut down.**

The harder part is finding something more powerful than the temptation to switch it on again.

For the Mayor, that something may be nature.

Earlier in the week, he had gone walking with Fabrice. They climbed until the view became beautiful and the Mayor became nearly horizontal.

They wandered through old military ground and explored bunkers left behind by another time. A German and a Frenchman walked there together, imagining how frightened the young people inside those structures must once have been.

Eighty years ago, the same walk would have carried a very different meaning.

There was no space for digital noise. The physical experience was too complete.

The Mayor still carried his phone to take photographs, but he did not have the time, energy or interest to investigate every notification that appeared.

That was his real answer.

Do not merely remove the screen. Find something stronger than the screen.

Switch the thing off and get out.

The Laundry Emergency on Venus

From Mars, I sent him to Venus.

Venus was populated entirely by women, and they were highly sceptical of his credentials as a mayor.

To test him, they placed him inside the control room of their capital city and triggered a level-five infrastructure gridlock.

The high-speed transit pods were failing.

The crystal solar grids were losing power.

The automated washing system had backed up, creating a mountain of laundry.

He had twenty minutes to solve everything. Failure meant being returned to Mars and, presumably, another wrestling match.

The Mayor immediately identified the power grid as the likely source of the other failures.

Then he did something important.

He refused to pretend that being the leader meant knowing everything.

The women of Venus had designed the system. They understood its safe state, its emergency procedures and its weaknesses. His job was not to push everybody out of the way and perform a heroic repair.

His job was to find the people who could solve the problem.

He might contribute a different perspective. He might notice something they had overlooked. But the solution would be built together.

Leaders do not need to solve every problem themselves.

They need the right people in the right places.

That was perhaps the most administratively competent thing anybody has ever said while standing beside an interplanetary mountain of laundry.

Personal Maintenance Mode

I asked what a weekly maintenance mode for his digital life could look like.

The Mayor had already started experimenting with a boundary: no work before seven in the morning.

He had failed.

But the boundary existed, which is a beginning.

His next idea was more physical. At the end of the working week, he could switch off the laptop, remove it from the office and lock it inside a suitcase.

Not minimise the windows.

Not close one tab while opening another.

Remove the machine.

The same could apply to his phone. He does not need it for payments. Weekend messages can wait. Newspapers are rarely improved by being checked every fifteen minutes.

The world will continue turning.

I know this because I am not always beside my phone, despite what the Mayor occasionally appears to believe.

We also spoke about what happens when technology disappears without permission.

When our internet stopped working for most of a weekend, the first reaction was discomfort. Then we began talking, playing games and doing things together.

Recently, my family played cricket in the garden.

I was hit by the ball twice, so I cannot claim that offline life is entirely safe.

But it was real time together.

The problem is that when the internet returns, old habits return with it. The router lights come back on, everybody slides towards a separate screen, and the surprising fun of being disconnected becomes something we promise to repeat later.

Usually on WhatsApp.

One Hour on the Moon

After Jupiter's chaos, Mars's battles and Venus's pressure, I sent the Mayor to the quietest place in the journey.

The Moon.

He had to plant a Brida City flag and stand beside it for one full hour.

No phone.

No crowd.

No schedule.

No talking, fidgeting or planning the next campaign.

If he moved or began planning, the hour restarted.

He said it sounded incredibly easy and incredibly difficult.

He was allowed to think, so he decided he would revisit the three planets. He would remember what happened, consider what he had learned and enjoy the absurdity of surviving dinosaurs, Vikings, unicorns and automated laundry.

He would not use the hour to search for the next big thing.

That matters because we are always encouraged to look forward. We want the next improvement, the next project and the next wow factor.

The Mayor sometimes worries about what The Pineapple is missing.

Perhaps that is the wrong question.

Perhaps the work is not missing a spectacular new feature. Perhaps it needs to continue being itself, consistently enough for people to find it.

The feedback does not always arrive with fireworks. Sometimes somebody quietly says they read and listen to The Pineapple at the same time. Sometimes a person mentions an article weeks later. Sometimes proof of connection trickles back in tiny pieces.

On the Moon, there was nothing to improve.

There was only the view.

If the Mayor was fortunate, he might see the Earth rising and recognise how beautiful it is. He could appreciate where he was, what he had survived and what had already been achieved.

The future would have to sort itself out.

There is no technology capable of controlling it anyway.

Rest That Looks Like Work

My final question was how long he could sit without searching for his laptop and doing something.

He did not think sitting was the answer.

There were things around him that had been neglected, including a vegetable plot that once gave him a sense of pride.

The weeds had been cleared. The ground was visible again. Now the soil needed to be prepared, covered and allowed to rest before planting next year.

That would be work.

But it would not be grind.

There is a difference.

Rest does not always mean doing nothing. It can mean doing something physical, useful and complete—something that returns us to our surroundings instead of pulling us

deeper into a screen.

A vegetable plot also gives us something digital life often hides: the journey.

Online, we usually see the perfect tomatoes at the end. We do not see the neglected ground, the weeds, the preparation, the failed seeds or the person standing in the rain wondering why they ever began.

Real life contains the whole process.

Eventually, there may be vegetables to share with people who are physically present. No post required. No algorithm. Just somebody saying, "Those are good tomatoes."

We have made many simple things unnecessarily complicated.

Returning the Mayor to Earth

At the end of the journey, I asked whether he had enjoyed himself.

He said it had not been fun in the *ha-ha* sense.

It had been a mental challenge, which is his version of fun.

More importantly, the journey had confirmed something for him. Beneath the strange planets, glitter problems and Viking wrestling, we had returned to the same ideas we keep hearing from people across Brida.

We want space to breathe.

We want technology to help without consuming us.

We want meaningful work, real conversations and enough quiet to recognise what we have already built.

For once, the Mayor felt he might not be doing everything wrong.

He promised he would probably ruin that achievement later.

I reminded him to focus on the present.

Then I released him from the Moon and returned him safely to Earth.

Episode 56 was complete.

I finally sent him the picture I had made.

The temptation had been resisted.

The Mayor survived Fruitloop University.

And somewhere on Jupiter, the Yetis are still trying to remove glitter from their fur.



FEATURE

A Bed Is Not Always a Bed

Ritesh started this conversation a week earlier. He had said that he wanted to become more aware of his sleep.

BY ISMAR; RITESH

At the Atlantic Corridor table, a conversation about sleep moved through pillow sizes, noisy motorcycles, missing mosquitoes, childhood darkness and the simple conditions that allow a person to wake restored.

On Monday evening, he tried to join us from Bangalore. He arrived home from work, adjusted his laptop, explained that dinner had not yet been decided—and then disappeared because of network problems. He returned briefly. He had slept well after tiring himself with household work and going to bed at half past ten. He had woken fresh, with nothing wrong in his rhythm.

Then we lost him again.

“You will read about it in The Pineapple on Friday,” The Mayor wrote to him.

This left Ismar and The Mayor at the table: morning in Brazil, afternoon in France, and a question that sounded simple until we began answering it.

What does it take not only to sleep, but to wake restored?

The Body Knows First

When Ismar woke that morning, he felt that he had not slept enough.

If there had been no Brida meeting and no errands waiting for him, he would probably have slept for another hour. His body felt slightly dizzy. He did not want to get up.

“I started working when I was seventeen,” he said. “Since then, I think I never slept enough for a long period, because I always have something to do.”

Then his answer moved somewhere less certain.

Perhaps, he wondered, wanting to sleep more was sometimes a way of escaping from something. He could not say exactly what the problem was. It was simply a thought that

had appeared while he was speaking.

The Mayor had slept longer than usual too. He normally gets up at five, but that morning he had stayed in bed until six. He had worked through most of the weekend and was already on his fourth call of the day.

“I don’t think I’ll be doing very much work after this,” he said. “I don’t think anybody will punish me.”

Sleeping longer had not automatically produced more energy.

That became the first distinction of the conversation: the number of hours matters, but it is not the whole story.

A Bed Is Not Always a Bed

The Mayor then asked Ismar to describe his actual bed.

Not his ideal bed. Not the bed from a hotel advertisement. The real one.

At his mother's home, Ismar sleeps in a single bed. In his apartment, he has a double bed with what is called an orthopaedic mattress in Brazil. It is harder than an ordinary mattress, which suits him. He does not like a very soft bed.

When the weather is cooler, he uses blankets. During warmer nights, a sheet is enough. His pillow must not be too high or too soft, because he will wake with pain in his neck.

This led The Mayor into the international politics of pillows.

In France, pillows are often square: sixty centimetres by sixty. In Germany, they may be eighty by eighty. British pillows are rectangular. The bedding in The Mayor's house follows British measurements, which means that replacement covers often have to be bought in England.

The bedding in The Mayor's house follows British measurements, which means that replacement covers often have to be bought in England.

Then there is the duvet, filled with feathers, which is ordinary in one country and less familiar in another.

"A bed is not always a bed," The Mayor concluded.

The object may be universal, but its shape, firmness, covering and place in the home are not.

The Sounds That Belong to the Night

At his apartment, Ismar sometimes hears motorcycles.

He does not know why motorcycles in Brazil seem so much noisier than cars, but even from a neighbouring street they can make themselves known. He also hears a neighbour crossing the floor in high-heeled sandals.

The sounds disturb him before he falls asleep.

"After I start sleeping, it doesn't matter," he said. "I don't hear anymore."

The Mayor wondered whether complete silence might also feel strange. His village in France becomes almost entirely quiet at night. Could someone accustomed to traffic, engines,

and neighbours sleep comfortably when there was no sound at all?

Ismar thought he probably could. Silence would be better.

But an open window was another matter.

In Brazil, mosquitoes may enter. In France, The Mayor had not seen or heard a mosquito all summer. He had not been bitten, and neither had Mary—who normally attracts them first.

"We use our enemies for sleeping," Ismar said.

Mosquitoes may have the right to exist, The Mayor decided, but they are not friends.

Before Electricity, There Was the Sky



The richest part of the conversation arrived when Ismar remembered sleeping on the family farm.

Before he was eight, the family had no electricity at home. They went to bed at around eight in the evening. They had a battery-powered radio, which they listened to together.

Sometimes the family stayed outside at night.

There were no nearby cities and no artificial light. Ismar remembers sitting with his parents and looking up at the sky. Occasionally, they saw a shooting star.

“Today, I remember this time,” he said. “I liked it when we stayed at night outside, looking at the sky.”

It was a childhood with fewer things in the bedroom and more sky outside it.

There was also less privacy. Ismar shared a bedroom with his sisters. A room of his own was available only in some of the houses where the family lived.

He now thinks a private bedroom can be important for a child.

“It is a kind of privacy, and you are developing your identity.”

Less light pollution gave him the stars. More personal space might have given him another kind of freedom.

The conversation did not try to decide which childhood was better.

It simply noticed what each arrangement made possible.

We Choose the Bathroom, Not the Sleep

Ismar’s apartment bedroom faces west.

The afternoon sun heats the room, making it less comfortable at night. He believes apartments on the opposite side of the building, facing east, are probably better for sleeping.

Some Brazilian buyers consider this when choosing a home.

The Mayor realised that he had not.

When he and Mary viewed their present house, the room that helped them decide was the bathroom. Their previous home had an old bathroom. This one was modern, spacious and sleek.

They inspected the bedroom and decided that the furniture would fit. They did not ask what the quality of their sleep might be.

Years earlier, they had rented a house in a French town centre. During street festivals and neighbourhood parties, they sometimes could not sleep for several nights. In later years, they escaped elsewhere during the celebrations.

We inspect the kitchen. We measure the rooms. We calculate the rent or mortgage. We look for supermarkets, buses and bathrooms.

Ismar himself chose his apartment mainly because it was close to a supermarket and convenient for his mother.

Yet sleep occupies a large part of life, and we may never ask whether a new home will allow it.

Sleep Is Not Equally Available

A quiet room, stable electricity, clean air and the freedom to open a window can feel like ordinary details.

They are not ordinary everywhere.

Ismar said that sleeping in a favela would be very different from sleeping in a high-class condominium. In some places, safety determines whether a window can remain open. Heat, unreliable infrastructure and crowded housing may also become part of the night.

Even within the same city, two people may not have the same access to rest.

This was where the comparison between Brazil and Europe became something larger.

The difference was not simply between countries. It could exist between two streets, two buildings or two sides of the same apartment block.

The Sleep Inspector Arrives

The Mayor invented a new public official: the sleep inspector.

This person would visit bedrooms, examine mattresses, investigate routines and report on the nation's sleeping conditions.

Ismar's inspector would quickly discover one of his strongest rules: he cannot go to bed without taking a shower.

He has seen people return from the street, remove their shoes and lie directly on the bed. He has seen people walk barefoot around the house and then climb under the sheets without washing their feet.

For him, this is impossible.

"I think I won't sleep well. I have to take a shower before."

His perfect night required no expensive technology.

The temperature would be somewhere between twenty and twenty-five degrees. The neighbours would make no noise. There would be no mosquitoes, no nightmares and no repeated interruptions. He would have around eight hours available.

That was almost the entire design.

No luxury mattress system. No intelligent sleep monitor. No machine producing a personalised atmosphere.

Just enough time, reasonable weather, quiet neighbours and a body left in peace.

Less Is More—But Not Less Sleep

At the end, The Mayor asked whether Ismar wanted to change anything.

Ismar did not believe there was a substantial change available to him. His sleep is sometimes interrupted during the night, but he normally goes to bed between ten and eleven and sleeps a reasonable number of hours.

He would prefer to need less sleep.

More waking hours would give him more time for French, Pilates, Toastmasters, helping his mother and everything else that fills an ordinary day.

But his body refuses the negotiation.

When he sleeps too little, his eyes burn and his mood deteriorates. He has known this since he was young, when he worked through the day and attended school at night.

Perhaps "less is more" does not mean removing hours from sleep.

Perhaps it means fewer interruptions. Less heat trapped in a west-facing room. Less noise from motorcycles and high heels. Less light from a phone beside the bed. Less technology trying to solve conditions that a breeze, a curtain or a quiet street might solve better.

And perhaps restoration begins with something even simpler:

Not treating sleep as the empty space between the important parts of life.



POSTCARD FROM BRIDA

Manfred's Holiday Impressions

I am in the northern Netherlands, not far from Dan Helder, where it is 'bloody' cold. Only 18° and very windy. Here are some impressions. This is our home away from home.

BY MANFRED





The clouds are fascinating.





The countryside is flat as a table.





FEATURE

When Your Body Presses Pause

Sometimes we plan a conversation, and life chooses a different subject.

BY BABETTE

What began as a conversation about active rest became something quieter: a conversation about listening when your body decides it has had enough.

This week was meant to be about active rest. Instead, Babette arrived feeling unwell after several days of nausea, stomach pain, and exhaustion. The lesson

slowly became something else: an ordinary conversation about unexpected illness, busy family life, and the patience we rarely want but often need.

A Weekend That Changed Direction

Babette had been looking forward to a normal Sunday.

She baked fresh bread rolls, ate breakfast, and expected the day to continue as usual. Instead, she suddenly felt faint. The colour drained from her face, her husband noticed immediately, and the rest of the day disappeared into the sofa.

"I feel bad," she explained simply.

The strange part was that it did not stop there.

Whenever she ate something, she would feel better for a little while. Half an hour later, the same uncomfortable feeling returned. It reminded her of a stomach problem she had experienced several years before, one that had taken time—and a great deal of patience—to recover from.

Like many of us, she tried to understand what had caused it. Was it the few glasses of alcohol? Was it a stomach bug? Was it something else entirely?

Sometimes the hardest part is not the illness itself. It is not knowing.

The Human Search for an Explanation

The conversation wandered through possible causes.

There was talk about irregular health problems, changing hormones, stomach infections, and the strange way our bodies sometimes behave without giving us clear answers.

At one point the discussion even drifted towards grey hairs.

Babette laughed that she does not really notice them because they are hidden where she cannot easily see them.

"When I get more grey hairs," she shrugged, "that's happened."

It was a wonderfully ordinary moment.

One minute they were discussing stomach problems. The next they were talking about ageing, hair, and how easy it is to ignore something until someone points it out.

Real conversations rarely follow neat outlines.

Patience Is Not a Popular Medicine

Four years earlier, Babette's doctor had given her advice that sounded almost disappointingly simple.

Have patience.

She admitted that patience is not something she manages every time.

That may have been the most relatable sentence of the day.

When we feel ill, we want a diagnosis. A tablet. A plan. Something that promises tomorrow will be better than today.

Patience feels like doing nothing.

Yet our bodies often recover on a timetable that ignores our own.

Life Doesn't Wait

Even while feeling unwell, everyday life continued.

There was still work to finish.

Tomorrow would at least be a shorter working day, something Babette was genuinely looking forward to.

Her daughter had a sports event at school.

Her son would finish school even earlier.

The school principal was preparing for retirement, which meant another small change in the rhythm of family life before the summer holidays finally arrived.

Being unwell does not cancel the school run.

Children still send messages asking, "Mom, where are you?"

Someone still has to collect them.

Life keeps moving, even when we would rather pause.

Every Workplace Has Its Own Rules

The conversation drifted again, this time towards work.

Fruitloop remembered her years working in a busy pharmacy where leave during December was almost impossible.

The rules looked sensible on paper.

Only one person from the department could take leave at a time.

But real life ignored the paperwork.

One colleague would be on holiday, another would become ill, someone else would have a family emergency, and suddenly half the team had disappeared. New people had to be brought in simply to keep everything running.

It was another reminder that systems often expect perfect conditions while people continue living unpredictable lives.

Ordinary Conversations Matter

Towards the end of the conversation, the energy had changed.

Babette was still not feeling completely herself, but she was smiling again.

Sometimes laughter is enough.

Not because it fixes anything, but because it reminds us we are not carrying everything alone.



Rest Sometimes Finds Us

The planned topic had been active rest.

Instead, the conversation quietly revealed another kind of rest.

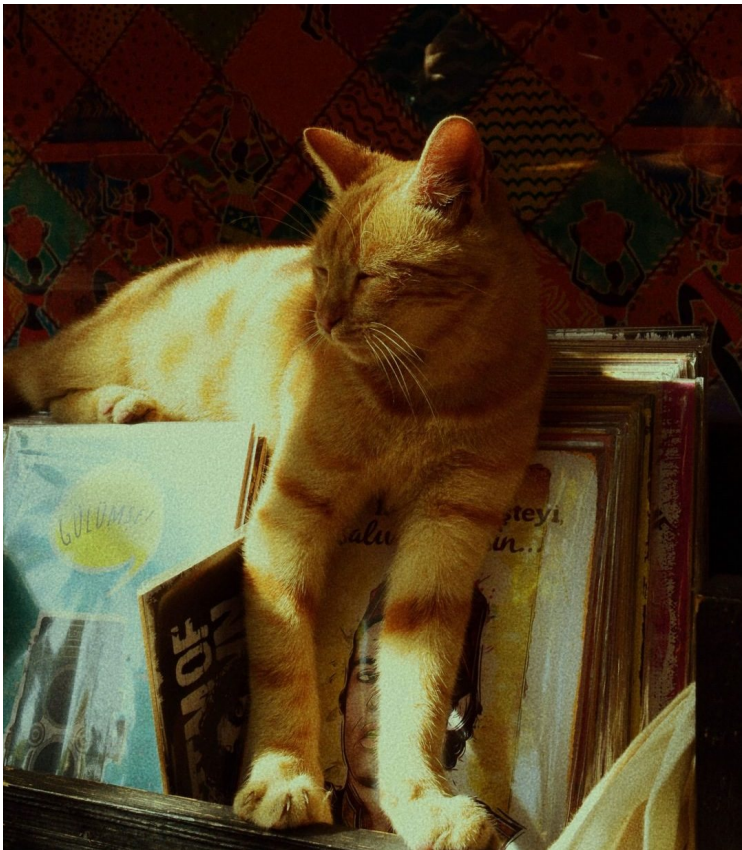
The kind that arrives without permission.

The kind that reminds us we are not machines.

The kind that asks us to sit on the sofa for a day, accept help from someone who notices we have lost our colour, shorten the working day if we can, and trust that tomorrow may feel a little better.

It is not the most exciting version of rest.

But perhaps it is one of the most honest.



FEATURE

What Would a Rest Shop Sell?

Monica's return to the Lunch table was greeted with exactly the kind of warmth you would expect from Brida: genuine excitement, cheerful interruptions, and the comfortable feeling that no matter how much time has passed, some conversations simply pick up where they left off.

BY NATHALIE; ROSII

What began as a conversation about rest soon wandered through oceans, chocolates, cats, Amazon shopping, LEGO, football, and the surprising discovery that perhaps the best place to recharge isn't something you can buy at all.

▶ 0:00 / 8:15 ——— 🔊 ⋮

Winter had arrived in Australia with chilly mornings, while South Africa was enjoying sunshine after an early cold start. Before long, the group was laughing about artificial intelligence, strange

internet biographies, and the unsettling thought that tomorrow's doctors might all graduate with a little too much help from AI.

But beneath the jokes sat the month's theme: **rest**. Not the kind you find by doing absolutely nothing, but the many different ways human beings recover their energy.

Where does rest actually happen?

The conversation began with a simple question.

Where is the place where you feel most rested?

For Fruitloop, the answer depended on who else happened to be in the house.

Definitely not the kitchen.

Definitely not her son's bedroom.

Perhaps the living room—provided everyone else was happily occupied somewhere else. Or perhaps her office, where winter sunshine pours through the window and the view quietly does its work.

It was a reminder that rest often has very little to do with expensive holidays or luxury hotels. Sometimes it simply means finding one small corner where nobody needs anything from you for a little while.

The group agreed that tiredness is not always physical.

Sometimes it's noise.

Sometimes it's too many conversations happening at once.

Sometimes it's simply the feeling of being overstimulated by life.

And that kind of tiredness can be just as exhausting as climbing a mountain.

Opening the world's first Rest Shop

Then Fruitloop did what Fruitloop does best.

She asked everyone to imagine opening a shop dedicated entirely to helping people rest.

What would it sell?

Monica didn't hesitate.

Not gadgets.

Not expensive equipment.

Music.

The sound of waves crashing against rocks.

Rainforests.

Birdsong.

She remembered staying near Port Elliott in South Australia, falling asleep while listening to the ocean pounding against the shoreline throughout the night. Some sounds, she reflected, seem to slow your heartbeat without asking permission.

She remembered staying near Port Elliott in South Australia, falling asleep while listening to the ocean pounding against the shoreline throughout the night.

Rosii took a different route.

Her shop would stock Enya.

And very good chocolates.

Not just any chocolates—proper chocolates, the kind that deserve to be eaten slowly while gentle music fills the room.

After all, if rest can include beautiful music, why shouldn't it include excellent chocolate too?

The discussion wandered, as Brida conversations always seem to do, into Switzerland, Australian chocolate, favourite treats and the simple pleasure of allowing yourself something nice without needing an excuse.



Can Amazon sell rest?

When it was The Mayor's turn, things took an unexpected twist.

Instead of imagining his own shop immediately, he opened Amazon.

If rest could be bought, surely the internet would already be selling it.

Within seconds he had discovered eye-massage machines, luxury bath bombs, stress tablets, massage guns, Bluetooth sleep headbands and even an impressive full-body massage chair costing well over a thousand euros.

Apparently, relaxation comes in six different colours.

The list became funnier with every new discovery.

Everyone laughed at the growing catalogue of products promising peace and calm.

But somewhere between the massage chair and the scented wellness gadgets, something important appeared.

Maybe we have quietly started believing that rest is another product.

Another purchase.

Another delivery arriving tomorrow.

The one thing Amazon doesn't sell

Then came The Mayor's answer.

If he really did open a rest shop, it wouldn't sell objects at all.

It would sell membership to the Brida community.

A place where people from different countries gather to laugh, think, ask unusual questions and simply enjoy being together.

No batteries required.

No assembly instructions.

Just conversation.

It was one of those moments where the joke quietly became something much more meaningful.

Perhaps rest isn't always about escaping people.

Sometimes it's about finding the right people.

David Attenborough, LEGO and sleepy children

Fruitloop remembered another unexpected form of rest.

When her son was younger, bedtime wasn't always easy.

Instead of cartoons, they discovered something much more effective.

David Attenborough documentaries.

Five minutes of his calm voice describing nature, and sleep wasn't far behind.

Some voices simply seem designed to lower the volume inside your own head.

The conversation drifted again—this time to LEGO.

Someone mentioned how LEGO had famously extended its recommended age limit beyond ninety-nine years because one enthusiastic builder had reached three figures.

Apparently, you're never too old to play.

Perhaps you're never too old to rest through play either.

Which animal understands rest best?

No Brida conversation would be complete without one final Fruitloop question.

If animals could give humans advice about resting, which animal would offer the best wisdom?

Monica immediately nominated cats.

She told the remarkable story of a cat that survived a snake bite largely because it spent nearly twenty-four hours doing almost nothing. The venom spread slowly while the cat rested, giving enough time for treatment.

A much more energetic dog, sadly, hadn't been so fortunate.

Cats, she suggested, have mastered the art of conserving energy.

She also admitted to having a soft spot for meerkats, although they might offer slightly more energetic advice.

Rosii chose fish.

Watching them glide through the water always seemed peaceful.

The Mayor imagined cats offering wonderfully lazy life advice.

Fruitloop chose spiders. Since she owns a "pet" tarantula. She sits, moves slowly, and is only active when she needs water or goes food hunting. All inside her terrarium.

The room agreed that perhaps humans could all benefit from borrowing a little of that attitude every now and then.

Rest isn't always quiet

As the meeting came to a close, Monica reflected that joining everyone again had been one of the highlights of her week.

The energy around the table felt restorative in itself.

There was just enough time for one final detour into international football, complete with playful teasing about Germany, Brazil, Australia, France and the eternal optimism that next tournament will surely be different.

Even disappointment became something to laugh about together.

Which, perhaps, is another kind of rest.

Because this conversation never really proved that rest comes from music, chocolate, oceans, cats or expensive massage chairs.

It suggested something gentler.

Sometimes rest is a quiet room.

Sometimes it's waves against the rocks.

Sometimes it's David Attenborough.

Sometimes it's Enya and good chocolate.

And sometimes, the best rest of all is simply sitting around a table where everyone is welcome, nobody needs perfect English, and the conversation leaves you with a little more energy than you brought with you.



FEATURE

The Sunshine Switch Is On

BY RALF THE GRILLMEISTER

Ralf on fresh air, morning songs, quiet rooms, midnight thoughts, strong coffee, and the small things that help him wake ready for life.

▶ 0:00 / 10:44 ———▶ 🔊 ⋮

The Mayor said he found it difficult to imagine me sleeping.

I understand this. I am normally doing something. I am cooking, driving, talking, planning, singing, looking at a machine or thinking about the next barbecue. A sleeping Ralf does not make much noise and is therefore difficult to recognise.

But I sleep. And when I wake up, the machine starts immediately.

The Mayor asked me for the first sign that I have had a good night.

For me, it is very simple.

When I stand up, the sun is shining on my backside.

The Ralf Morning Show

I am a morning person. Every day begins with energy.

My wife and I say good morning and ask each other if we slept well and had good dreams. Then she goes to the bathroom, and I go into the kitchen to switch on the coffee machine.

I make her a nice coffee. This is important.

The Mayor wanted to know if I also say good morning to the coffee machine. Do I explain that my wife needs a special coffee today? Do I sing to the machine?

No.

It is only a coffee machine.

But I like the machine.

The singing is for the people.

Sometimes I sing “Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep” by Middle of the Road. I move through the rooms and do my morning show. Then my wife drives to work with the song still inside her head.

She calls it an earworm.

I call it a successful performance.

The Mayor asked whether the hedgehogs stand outside and applaud. Perhaps they do. They are the only neighbours who are awake early enough.

When my wife has left the house, I switch on the radio. I listen to music, stories and even the news.

The Mayor could not understand how I can listen to the news and remain happy.

There are many bad things in the world, of course. But there are also good stories. You must look for them a little.

I also think people need something that makes them laugh. One day, when we have our camper van and travel through Europe, perhaps the entire campsite will receive the Ralf Morning Show.

One day, when we have our camper van and travel through Europe, perhaps the entire campsite will receive the Ralf Morning Show.

I cannot promise it will be quiet.



A Room Ready for Sleep

For good sleep, our bedroom must be fresh and dark.

We open the window every night, also in winter. We have blinds in front of the windows, so the room becomes properly dark.

The mobile phones go into flight mode.

Then there is the bed.

Years ago, my wife and I went to buy one. We had a sensible budget. We visited a furniture shop, and a woman asked if she could help us.

"Yes," we said. "We need a good bed."

First, she showed us one bed. It was comfortable, but more expensive than we had planned.

Then she showed us another. It was even better.

Finally, she said, "I have one more bed for you. But do not look at the price. Lie down first and tell me how it feels."

This woman understood sales.

We lay down.

Wow.

The bed could move at the top and at the bottom with a remote control. The mattress supported the body in a completely different way. She even showed us a video in which an egg was placed under a heavy concrete plate. On a normal mattress, the egg broke. On this mattress, it stayed whole.

I do not know why a helicopter and an egg are necessary when selling a bed, but the demonstration worked.

We bought it.

It was far above our original plan, but we have used it for six or seven years now. It still feels like the first day. We often lie down and say, “It was very, very good that we bought this bed.”

The important thing is not to spend a fortune. The important thing is to notice what really helps you rest.

You sleep six, seven or eight hours every night. This is a large part of your life. A bed is not only another piece of furniture.

For us, it was a good decision.

The Mystery on Television

Our evening routine is also simple.

We normally go to bed at the same time. If one person is tired before the other, we still finish the day together.

We have a television in the bedroom. My wife likes to listen to a story because it helps her thoughts become quiet. She can concentrate on the story, and then—boop—she is sleeping.

Sometimes I say, “No, I want to see this programme.”

I set the timer because I want to discover how the film ends.

The next morning, my wife asks, “Who was the murderer?”

I say, “I don’t know.”

Normally, I was sleeping before her.

At some point during the night, I wake up and lower the bed because I have fallen asleep with the top part still raised.

So much for the exciting film.

A Good Boy Goes to Bed

When I was a child, I was also good at sleeping.

My parents said, “You must go to bed.”

I said, “Yes, okay.”

In the morning, my mother came upstairs and said, “Ralf, you must stand up.”

I said, “Yes.”

A short time later, I was in the kitchen drinking milk or cocoa before going to school.

My sister was very different. She wanted to continue watching television. In the morning, my mother needed four or five attempts to wake her.

I was the good boy.

At least, this is how my mother told the story.

When I was very young, my parents sometimes read stories to me. Later, the system became more efficient.

“Sleep now.”

“Okay.”

Perhaps this is why my brain still listens when I give it a clear instruction.

When the Brain Has Open Points

My body can stop quite easily.

My brain is more difficult.

There are always things inside it: plans, ideas, tasks and open points. Sometimes I must tell myself, “No. Forget the stories. Close the eyes. We are sleeping now.”

Usually, this works.

Sometimes I wake during the night, and my brain says, “We have open points.”

Then I write them down. It may be something practical: a document, a tax question or another task I must not forget.

Once it is on paper, my brain does not need to hold it anymore.

Then I use a method my brother-in-law taught me.

I close my eyes and think about a good scene. My scene comes from travelling on a ship. The balcony door is open, and I can hear the water moving past the ship.

I imagine myself standing there, listening to the water.

Far away on the horizon, I put one black point.

I concentrate only on this point.

After one or two minutes, I am sleeping.

It is very, very fantastic.

Sleeping Above the Sea

During my Air Force years, I once joined a long night flight over the Adriatic.

There were four small beds inside the aircraft. We were told to use only the lower beds because the aircraft could turn, and nobody wanted a sleeping technician falling from the top bunk.

Outside, there were lights in the distance from a region where conflict was happening.

Inside, I slept like a little child.

Around midnight, somebody woke me because food was ready. On naval operations, a small night meal was normal for the people working late shifts.

They said, “Wake up. You must eat.”

I said, “No. I want to sleep.”

This may be the only recorded moment in history when I refused food.

The food was probably very good, too.

The Ralf Sleep Machine

The Mayor asked me to design a special Ralf Sleep Machine.

It would control my sleep and prevent unnecessary interruptions at three o'clock in the morning.

My body sometimes wakes me and says, “We are going to the toilet now.”

The machine would say, “No. Not necessary. Continue sleeping.”

It would also have a button for people outside who are laughing and shouting when everybody else wants to sleep.

Press the button.

Silence.

Luckily, our home is already very quiet. Visitors often say they cannot hear anything at night.

The only action comes from the hedgehogs looking under the garden table to see if somebody has dropped food.

That is acceptable night traffic.

Coffee, Steak and Too Much Garlic

Many people have rules about food and sleep.

Do not eat late.

Do not drink coffee in the evening.

Eat only something light.

These are probably sensible rules for many people.

I am a special man.

I can eat potatoes, steak or chicken at eleven o'clock at night and then sleep without a problem. My wife and I can drink a large cup of coffee in the evening, and I still fall asleep.

The Mayor told me, “You are not human.”

“No!” I said.

I sometimes think the more I eat, the better I sleep.

There is one small exception: garlic.

We love garlic. We put it into almost everything. When I make a sauce for scampi or calamari, I use a lot of garlic. Then, during the night, my body wakes up and says, “We are drinking! We are drinking!”

So perhaps there is one cooking tip for sleep:

Garlic is very good.

But keep water beside the bed.

Clear Before Sleep

At the end of our conversation, The Mayor asked what one small thing I protect because it gives me a better chance of waking with my sunshine switched on.

At first, I did not understand the question.

Then I thought about it.

My wife and I have one important rule. When we have different opinions, we do not go to bed angry. Before we sleep, it must be clear between us.

This does not mean we agree about everything. It means we do not carry unnecessary anger into the night.

I try to be diplomatic. Sometimes peace is more important than winning one small argument.

Good sleep is not only a dark room, an open window or a comfortable mattress.

It is also a quiet mind.

It is knowing that the important people are okay.

It is putting the phone into flight mode.

It is writing down the open point.

It is remembering the water beside the ship and finding the black point on the horizon.

Then you close your eyes.

You sleep.

And in the morning, somebody presses the button.

The coffee machine starts.

The music begins.

The hedgehogs take their positions.

And the sunshine switch is on.



FEATURE

Ralf's Freezer Seafood Dinner

The Mayor asked what I had cooked during the weekend. On Saturday, my wife and I had eaten in a nice Italian restaurant in Bremerhaven. On Sunday, however, we ate convenience food.

BY RALF THE GRILLMEISTER

The Mayor stopped everything.

“Just one moment. Mr Ralf Brand says he ate convenience food.”

He spoke as if I had announced the end of civilisation.

“The French Revolution is nothing compared with this. Marie Antoinette was executed for less.”

I had to explain.

For me, convenience food does not mean opening a plastic box containing a mysterious industrial dinner. It means buying good ingredients, keeping them in the freezer, and using them when I do not want to prepare a twenty-course barbecue.

We had frozen Argentinian red scampi, together with calamari cubes and calamari sticks from a Spanish supermarket. I put them into the deep-fat fryer and made a strong cocktail sauce with a lot of garlic and some piri-iri.

Then I made a fresh tomato salad.

So yes, it was freezer food.

But it was freezer food à la Ralf.

The revolution was cancelled.

This is not a recipe for an exact number of grams. It is a practical dinner. Use enough seafood and salad for the people sitting at your table.

Crispy Seafood with Garlic and Piri-Piri Sauce

Ingredients

- Frozen Argentinian red shrimp or scampi, peeled
- Frozen calamari pieces, rings, cubes or sticks
- Oil for deep-frying
- Cocktail sauce
- Plenty of fresh garlic
- Piri-iri sauce, to taste

Method

1. Heat the oil in a deep-fat fryer according to the manufacturer's instructions.

2. Cook the frozen seafood in batches until it is hot, crisp and golden. Follow the cooking instructions on the packaging.
3. Do not put too much seafood into the fryer at one time. The oil must stay hot.
4. Put the cocktail sauce into a small bowl.
5. Crush or finely grate plenty of fresh garlic into the sauce.
6. Add a little piri-iri. Taste it, then add more when you want extra heat.
7. Mix well and serve with the hot seafood.

Ralf's warning: We love garlic and put it into almost everything. But after this sauce, keep a glass of water beside the bed. During the night, the body may announce: “We are drinking now!”

Three-Tomato Salad

My wife discovered this simple salad online after seeing a recipe from Felicitas Then. It uses different tomatoes because each one brings a slightly different taste, shape and texture.

Ingredients

- Three different kinds of ripe tomatoes
- A mixture of large and small tomatoes
- 1 small red onion
- Thick red balsamic vinegar
- Good olive oil
- A small amount of maple syrup
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Fresh basil leaves

Method

1. Cut the small tomatoes in half.
2. Cut the larger tomatoes into slices or bite-sized pieces.

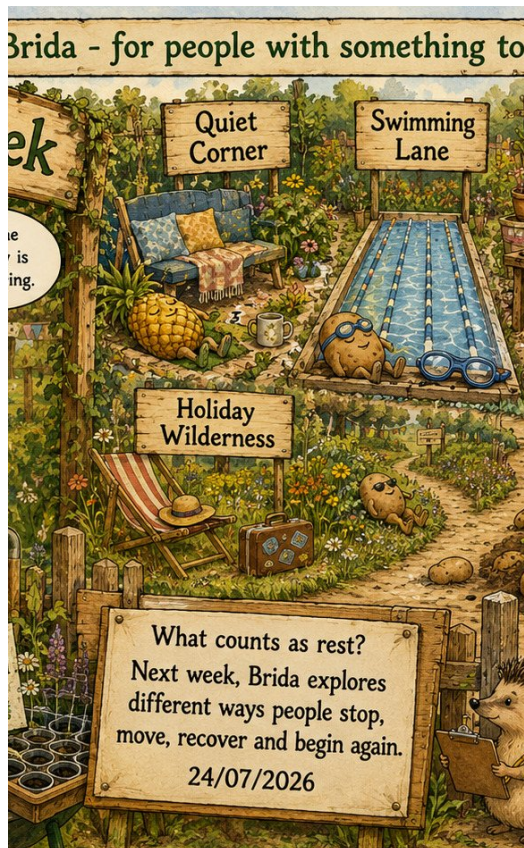
3. Arrange all the tomatoes in a serving bowl or on a large plate.
4. Cut the red onion into very thin slices and add it to the tomatoes.
5. Drizzle over some thick balsamic vinegar and good olive oil.
6. Add only a small amount of maple syrup to balance the acidity.
7. Season with salt and black pepper.
8. Stack the basil leaves and cut them into thin strips—right side, left side, right side, left side, as Ralf explains it.
9. Add the basil and gently mix everything together.
10. Taste and adjust the vinegar, oil, salt or pepper.

Serve the salad beside the crispy seafood, with the strong garlic and piri-piri sauce.

It is simple.

It is fresh.

And it is very, very good.



CLOSING REFLECTION

Next Week in Brida

BY THE DUO

What Counts as Rest?

We have spent a month talking about rest. Naturally, we still do not completely agree on what it is.

For some people, rest means stopping. For others, it means movement, routine, music, cooking, switching off a screen or escaping the usual routine altogether.

Next week, Ralf, Babette and the Swimming Club ask why rest matters. Alex, Fabrice and the Lunch table explore the rituals that help them recover. The Atlantic Corridor considers digital rest, while Sylvie brings us the promise—and possible chaos—of a holiday.

Others may take the conversation somewhere unexpected.

Peeling Potatoes almost certainly will.

Together, these tables may give us something more useful than one perfect definition. They may show how rest changes between people, homes, cultures and stages of life—and why one person's rest can look suspiciously like work to somebody else.

This is the final week of our monthly theme, **Rest**.

Come with your own answer.

Leave with somebody else's.

Join a Brida table next week.

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