

Chocolate

Chocolate is lonely.

Eating a bar of Lindt, alone at home. When the song ends, they play it again – the various lovers of chocolate, in all their shapes and sizes. Scattered across the nation, alone on their sofas. It is not an experience they share with others. Not knowingly. Not like the meal they just cooked and enjoyed in rich company. Sparkling conversation, clinks of cutlery. The pleasure of others. Irrepressible burps. A bag of Doritos, and then of Tangfastics. Laughter. They lick the mouth-watering acid off their fingers. A brush with intimacy as dusty fingers touch, reaching into the crinkly packets. Not so with the bar of Lindt, later that night. Not so with chocolate.

Chocolate lied to them. It lied with the gently seductive glow of Nutella on white bread, of the surface of hot chocolate quivering in the small hours. It lied with its sexy Magnums, with Lynx Dark Temptations. Such things are rarely shared with beautiful, sexy people. They are rarely shared with anyone. Chocolate lied to them, with its kinship to raw hedonism, with its fingers forever reaching out towards the eternal pleasure of youth. It lied with the promise of company. They chew mournfully, gratefully, on their fourth square of Lindt. The trees lining the roads outside their sweaty apartments are hunched in the summer rain. The song ends and starts a third time. Do they *want* to keep it to themselves? Or do they only suspect that no one wants to share it with them?

Chocolate is shameful.

A *Gû* lava pudding. *Parks and Recreation*. They love this episode, they think – the various lovers of chocolate, in all their shapes and sizes. Scattered across the nation, alone in their beds. Shuddering like animals trying to shake water from their hides as the first spoonful opens their saliva ducts – sweetly, painfully. Breaking off another wedge of greasy Toblerone – you’re meant to push the triangles together, not apart, they say to no one. It’s much easier this way.

It is fine to order a dessert, sometimes. You can’t just have one to yourself, of course: that is unacceptable. But above all, it *cannot* be chocolate. The warm, gooey, comforting, perfect beauty of chocolate cake in your mouth. It is not for their prying eyes. It will only turn into ashes, after all, overcome by the shiver of shame brushing the hairs on your neck.

Another prosaic choice, well done Charlie, he thinks. He wishes he could love the others – love curiosity for its own sake, as he does chocolate. A lemon tart, meringue. A beignet, a palmier, a mille-feuille, a crème brûlée. All the other stupid French ones. That’s what proper people have, when they deign to have dessert. But I’m not a proper person like them, I never will be; he opines again: my tastes are ruled by chocolate. I wish they would all just leave, leave me with my chocolate cake. It’s hard to dance like no one’s watching when everyone is watching.

Chocolate is cruel.

Taking children from their homes. They weep for their children – the victims of chocolate, in all their shapes and sizes. Scattered across the Ivory Coast, trembling, robbed. But what would happen if they fought its dominion? Could the mask of humanity fall further from the face of capital? What would we do for one more taste? Lift streets from the ground, turn houses into ghosts?

A gale blows in from the coast, a wind of needles. It wraps itself around a building of brick and mortar, threads itself through a honeycomb of apartments. Inside, you raise the first sweet spoon of chocolate mousse to your trembling lips. Thank God.