Chapter 1

My bedroom during my wakeful hours, is full of shadows and little shapes of light. They seem to shift, change shape and playfully challenge me. Sometimes they land upon my perfume bottles – the ones I have recently polished.

Those little glass bottles contain fragments of memories so powerful that I open them sparingly, because just like Pandora, I’m never sure if I will be able to cope with them.

This bottle has been hidden in a box in the loft for decades and only recently found when my mother moved out of our childhood home. For months, it lay exposed, but in a box labelled for the dump! When I finally got a chance to sort through this box, I polished it and pulled the glass stopper out.

Its contents an unattractive dark yellow, released waves of memories- Woody, floral, green, powdery earthy with warm spices. Memories of a warm summer day in 1983 came flooding back.

It was the end of school, forever! A moment I had dreamed of for almost a decade and suddenly I felt a loss, a lack of direction and sense of purpose. Ahead, all I could see were long days with no structure.

A meadow, brown with heat and buzzing with bees, crickets and dragonflies.

Another layer of galbarum, hyacinth, lemon bergamot meets the heart of rose, jasmine, violet and ylang-ylang.

Peter with his honey-coloured sun tanned skin and sun bleached dark hair hanging about his shoulders, framing his heart shaped face and dark brown eyes. I couldn’t believe that he was looking at me as he made his way through the Oktoberfest beer tent crowd towards me. My friend nudged me and I felt my cheeks burn. He spoke quietly, kindly and casually to me and my shyness dissipated. I don’t remember what he said.

Base notes of musk, patchouli, sandal, amber, vetiver and moss. Roiling surges of desire to be loved, held, adored to feel alive and to learn the secret of what makes us. I am no longer in control of my longings; I had fallen head long for this beautiful man. Every thought, every waking moment was now different.

The days were long and meaningless, no more school or exams, no plans just peace – or that is what I craved. It was an illusion; I failed my exams and my plan to go to university and so my future was now uncertain. All that mattered to me was this beautiful man who seemed to provide all the answers to things I wanted to know. He was attracted to me.

To me!

Why…this was an obscure feeling.

That someone like him would like someone like me was overwhelming to me. It gave me a strange confidence. I wanted all the kids at school to see me with him to make them feel bad for calling me ugly and laughing at me for all those years. It’s not until now that I realize they move on and no one cares.

But to me, it really mattered.

This man changed my world forever. The secrets of this change are buried deep. I would hope that I can trust you to keep them buried in a deep grave forever!

Chapter 2

Another time, another place, a different chapter of life- another scent.

Timeless and extremely well balanced. The spice dominates; coriander, Sandalwood and Tonka Bean with just enough sweetness from the juicy peach and depth from the amber. The florals; jasmine, Bulgarian Rose, mimosa and orange blossom are far from overwhelming, and the rose notes fit nicely in the mix. The vanilla base keeps it modern but avoids dragging it into an overly sweet mess.

Very alluring and seductive without a touch of vulgarity - New York city.

Giles was handsome and rich. His hand-made shoes and personally tailored suits added another layer of elegance onto a figure born into privilege and oozing with confidence.

‘How would I know?’

I had never before met someone from his background. He spoke almost entirely in French so it was difficult to discern any edge from his accent.

But I did know; just the same way that anyone would know.

He was gorgeous and he apparently fancied me. That was the shocking truth!

Me…why?

I didn’t stop to think, as I would now, that he probably fancied a no-strings attached shag from a relatively uncomplicated European female with a career and an apartment and who showed interest in him. The European part is very important here because he was a terrible snob, he thought Americans uncouth and beneath him, Brits were probably only one step up and of course inferior to the French. This was explicit from the start. I chose to overlook this because I was so happy to find that he was interested in me.

Me…Oh my god! Me!

I stayed by my answer phone for the next few desperate to hear his voice every time I picked up the phone or retrieved a message. Call waiting was a technological revolution and a blessing.

‘Mum, wait, hold on, I’ve got a call on the other line.’

‘Oh Hi! I’ll call you back’, I said as I thought, damn its only her.

‘Mum, what were we talking about.’

‘ Cant you leave the calls on the other line, we have managed very well without having calls on the other line and it’s just an intrusion.’ The rebuke stung but I ignored it. We have had similar conversations about the pill and HRT over the years and again I have ignored the implied disapproval.

He did call and I hope that I sounded suitably casual when I probably sounded desperately grateful. I daydreamed through my day at work, concentrating on what I would wear, which perfume and which lipstick. Would I have time to wash my hair and squeeze in a quick run at the gym.

Work was a disappointment, I had moved from East London in 1989 to New York for a job working as a designer for a small knitwear company based in a loft in Soho. Leaving London at that time was not hard. I had been scrounging a living, working as a waitress and attempting to find a similar design job in a London based company, but those jobs were like gold dust. I got a few commissions and worked on my portfolio and traipsed it around trying to find a way to make a living with my textile and fashion degree. I had the idea that I had a unique style and someone somewhere would get it. On more than one occasion I had an interview in a Knightsbridge restaurant in the evening with a man who I was hoping to impress and on at least three occasions that spring to mind, I did impress them very much but it was not employment that they wanted to discuss with me. I ran for my life from two of those meetings.

The introduction of the poll tax was the final blow that year for the tory government and like almost all the impoverished students I knew at the time I didn’t pay mine, but long after it was abolished, I was issued with a court summons to pay it. The letter took a little longer to find my Manhattan forwarding address and I decided that whilst I am a very law abiding citizen by nature – I don’t like to stand out of the crowd at any time – they could stick it.

So having had a telephone interview with my new employer, I packed my bags. It seemed like the last act of a desperate person to some of my more stable friends and a few came to see me to counsel me to re- consider my decision.

On balance, being broke in a cock-roach filled Whitechapel flat versus earning what seemed to me a huge salary in a Soho loft in Manhattan was no contest.

I envied the girls at college who had a flat and a trust fund or a boy friend who was a permanent fixture. I was single, broke and sick of my freezing flat, cold baths, cockroaches and waitressing.

My new job was not what I had imagined it would be and within a week I was resigned to looking for another job. It would have been a lot better if my dizzy employer hadn’t forgotten that she had already hired another ex student from my college. She decided that we would job share. What she didn’t know was that this other designer was my greatest rival. According to friends at the time, she had heard that I had been offered the job and persuaded the course leader to ring our employer and suggest choosing her to replace me as she was clearly a better candidate. So, she got the flat that went with the job and I was left to fend for myself – how did that happen, she got to New York the day before and our employer gave the flat to her. When I showed up, she burst into post-baby blues tears and left her husband to sort out the mess. It’s never a good feeling to think that your employer feels sorry for you and so makes a job for you. You want to feel that you are there because you are the best and that they should feel grateful to have you. At least that was what I thought.

Navigating my way through my day and trying to prove my worth against my competitive, over bearing rival was hard work. I did have a loyal and supportive friend who made it all seem like a game.

Ali was a gregarious Iranian gay man who came to the city to build his business in a country that he thought would allow him to live his life as a free gay man. His family, once prosperous and wealthy in the pre – Islamic state Iran had relocated all over the world. Switzerland, London. Philadelphia and New York city. I met him when I worked on a design placement within his studio the previous summer. I loved him, he was funny and caring, immensely creative and kind. His apartment was full of beautiful Persian paintings, rugs and artifacts. He cooked the most delicious, exquisitely flavoured- almost perfumed Iranian food. All of it presented in Persian china and he presented his dinners with candlelight and flowers. We listened to jazz from the blue note and his favourite divas, Ella Fitzgerald, Eartha kit and Nina Simone. When I hear their music now, I am transported to his elegant apartment and I see his smile.

After the tedium of work I met Ali to visit galleries, listen to jazz and to meet his friends over dinners at his apartment.

On the evening when I was going to meet Giles, he rang me at work to discuss what I should wear. It seemed obvious to me: I didn’t have much choice. I had moved to New York with a suitcase a month before and all of my money was going on the rent. Working in the garment center in those days meant that at lunchtime you could go to sample sales. Most of them were piled high with stuff no-one should ever want but there were ticketed sales and I had just recently been to a Donna Karan sale and bought a beautiful silk shirt. It was a beautiful thick sateen silk and printed with a paisley design in reds and ochres. I loved the heavy shell buttons; it felt reassuring expensive. I felt stylish when I wore it. That evening I wore my fuchsia silk lingerie, another recent purchase from a late-night trip to TK max. As I left my apartment, I felt as though life was good, I had some money – not much, a job, my own apartment- and now a hot date. For years, ever since I was sharing a bedroom with my sister, I have dreamed about having my own apartment in the city. This one was everything I dreamed of it was a three-story walk-up, the attic of a brownstone in a tree lined street connecting Riverside Drive and 8th Avenue. I had a tiny little street-facing studio.

I walked past a wide glass window and noticed my reflection.

Who are you? I thought.

Does anyone know who they are at twenty-three as they try to make their way in the world with a new job, in a new city and a new country.

I can be whomever I want to be I decided bravely. But my bravery was brittle as I discovered at a drinks reception one evening as a beautiful strange black man asked me where I had moved to the city from. I told him feeling very cosmopolitan and then as quick as a flash he shattered my illusions with his retort’

‘So, what are you running away from?’

I was filled with outrage and consternation that he had dared to shine a light on my fragile ego. Needless to say, I got out of there as fast as I could.

Was it a coincidence that he was an outsider too? – Maybe that was why he chose to speak to me. I wish I had stayed longer to find out now.

Dating can be deliriously exciting if you pretend to be who ever you want to be but there is always a point when the truth comes out.

As I walked past my reflection and wondered who I was, the heavy, metal grid under my feet vibrated as a subway train rattled through to the station, a whoosh of hot air and dust blew up my legs and ruffled my newly washed hair. Great I thought! I usually avoid those grids because you can see right through to the subway and I always imagine them giving way but that evening I was too busy to notice.

I took the downtown train. It thundered into the station with another great tide of warm, stale, urine-drenched air that flew at me as if it were determined to exorcise me of my personal scent - freshly washed skin and hair and Chanel.

That’s typical I thought as I looked for a stain free seat. I ran my hand through my hair trying to place my curls in the places they had been when I left home.

Why do the lights on subway trains make absolutely everyone look like a serial killer or a homeless person or just a desperately lost person down on their luck? Did I look like this? I focused on my skirt. Someone was in the aisle and trying to get my attention. Oh dear. I felt conspicuous and I prayed for invisibility.

‘Hey lady, spare any change? I take notes, cheques, American Express.

I looked up at him, shocked and startled by his creative banter. He smiled and I was moved by his humour but not enough to get my purse out. I shook my head and looked away. He moved on and I was grateful but I felt as if somehow I had let myself down.

Why is that?

Why do you need to search your soul when a fellow human asks you for something and you neglect to give them anything? It occurred to me that he possessed a skill that I would never possess and that made him capable of a life better than this. He was a performer but his story was his secret.

My stop.

My heart was beating so fast as I exited the subway and found myself on a busy Soho street. I had a map in my bag but there no way in hell that I was going to pull it out and look like a tourist. So I tried to compose myself and I headed in the direction that I thought the restaurant must be. For someone with no sense of direction, this city is so easy to navigate but Soho does not follow the grid.

He would come by cab and I didn’t want to look as dis-shevelled and vile-smelling as I felt.

I walked two blocks to the restaurant, it was French – obviously!

Dinner was fascinating for a girl from a large family of many siblings who ate everything including yours if you didn’t eat it fast enough. Giles played with his exquisitely expensive starter. He ignored the delicious smelling bread the waiter offered. I was gagging for bread and butter, but I declined too. My stomach felt as though it was about to leap out and snatch some. He sipped the fine wine, single estate. Of course, he had inspected the label and the year of the vintage closely. I tried not to inhale mine as he lit a Gauloise.

Every bite, tiny as it was, was followed by a cigarette. So, the starter was returned to the kitchen barely touched. I asked him why he hadn’t eaten it and he answered,

‘Only the proletariat eat everything on their plate,’ he told me with a delicious sneer. I smiled trying to look as if I shared his view. Damn! Why didn’t I know that, I thought, almost choking with embarrassment? Obviously, it’s very chic to be hungry I decided.

I can’t imagine what we talked about, clearly, we had nothing in common, other than being European which seemed to count for a lot for this imperious snob.

Later, after dinner, we took a cab uptown to Central Park to a very swish venue near the Boat House where one of Giles’ friends ( French! ) was having a party. Many kisses later and many introductions too, I was trying to find someone who spoke English or who didn’t know everyone in the room or who simply wasn’t speaking too quickly. There is nothing worse in my opinion than looking like the one was wasn’t invited to the party. Giles explained helpfully to me that

‘There are no native English speakers Ere!’

This was a French snub. The hundred years war has never ended. The French still find the English to be their antagonists, there was just no way around this historical problem I thought as I accepted the inevitable isolation.

The music was awful 80s French pop and the dance floor was vibrating to, Ca plan pour moi. Giles pulled me with him to dance with a load of others and they all looked so happy as they sang along. God, I’m so glad my friends at home couldn’t see me now.

This was the end of the 1980s, the music scene in Manhattan was drawing a lot of attention as garage music and black and jazz sounds were taking over the clubs here as well as in London. You didn’t have to go far to hear the music that the world would soon follow and here, I was listening to awful French pop. You could probably count on one hand the amount of decent French bands around then and here we were reliving the school disco at this apparently hi society gathering.

The agony ended quite soon, and we headed to a nearby apartment building. It was imposing, notable for its polished chrome, sweeping drive and livered doormen. My apartment didn’t have any of those attributes. We took the polished mahogany paneled lift to the penthouse and Giles introduced me to his male flat-mates who were relaxing and watching soccer in their business clothes. They treated me with amused interest and carried on watching the tv.

Giles room was stark, fairly tidy and devoid of personal effects except for shaving lotion and cufflinks. Cartier.

It was late and taken as read that I would stay. I was expected to perform, this was implicit and so eager to please I tried and failed to add any affection or romance to the event. I felt like a by-stander, a vessel, a functional part of the process. It was a self-gratifying, shag for him, completely immemorable from my point of view. His kisses were tainted with garlic and Gauloise and left a sour taste in my mouth.

When the alarm sounded, Giles groaned and hunted on the floor by the bed with his eyes still shut, for the cigarettes. I was fascinated to find that he didn’t shower but sprayed himself liberally with cologne and opened a freshly laundered hand-made shirt packed in tissue, slipped on his tailor-made suit, applied his gold cufflinks and chose a spectacular Hermes tie. You need to know here, that I was a textile designer, I loved beautiful fabrics and I really appreciated the art of fine tailoring and here was a man who only owned these things. I was in awe.

He gelled his hair into place, brushed his teeth, and looked at me to make sure that I wouldn’t make him late for work with any unnecessary toiletries. God he was beautiful!

I’ve had brothers, I’ve camped in the Himalaya and I know how to get up and running without making a fuss but surely, more effort should have been made to see that my needs were catered for. Why didn’t I demand that they were, I ask myself?

We took the elevator down to the reception. I stared at his hand made loafers and then at my pride and joy, band new Gucci loafers. There was nothing to say. I swear I saw the doorman give Giles a crafty wink, but maybe he was squinting with the sun in his eyes. It was a beautiful clear Manhattan day. Bitterly cold but dazzlingly bright. We walked around the corner and Giles stopped outside the deli and stubbed out his second cigarette of the morning.

‘The croissants here are edible,’ he announced.

He went in not waiting to hear my thoughts on this. The counter was just inside, and I smiled as the Mexican man serving greeted us both jovially.

‘Black coffee’ Giles ordered without any sort of friendly greeting and looked back at me.

I hate black coffee but clearly white coffee was for the working class and so I accepted.

‘Make that two and three croissants.’

‘Do you go in there often’ I asked him aware of how much like a dating question that was.

‘Every day’ he said.

That seemed odd when I thought how unfriendly he was.

‘But you didn’t say anything to that nice Mexican serving you.’

‘There are hundreds of illegal Mexican working in this city, they should be grateful we give them work,’ he told me.

I was out of my depth here and an argument was beyond me, we sipped our scolding hot coffee and Giles inhaled his croissants as we hurried down the subway stairs, vomit, urine and weed smells assaulting our senses. The smell and the thunder of the trains arriving and leaving drowned the moment. The platform was stuffed with suited commuters just like us, this was after all the Upper Eastside at rush hour. The train arrived within minutes and a rush of putrid gritty dust filled my lungs and hair and stung my eyes. Giles pecked me on the cheek, said Ciao and jumped in as I waited on the platform trying to remember where I was and how I would get to work.

I’m not sure if we ever saw each other again. I am sure, however, that I was probably gutted but I must have known that, for him, I was out of his league, most probably one of the great Proletariat!

And as for me?

Why couldn’t I just meet someone with whom I felt safe, secure and happy, then I could go home and begin a grown-up sensible, independent life and all of my family could be proud of me and invite us to their houses for weekends and make me godmother to their children. I could go to church on Sundays and do up a lovely cottage with roses and hollyhocks around the door.

Because I am never going to fit in! I am not made that way and I don’t want to be, I decided defiantly.

There was a big part of me that was still running away. I hate that man who found out my secret at that otherwise non-descript drinks reception.

Chapter 3

When the reality of my job set in and with it, boredom, at the same time as the reality of living in a studio on 13th Street, East side set in too, I began in earnest to change my recently massively changed life. The apartment was easier to change than my job, I responded to an ad in the village voice and it was available by the time my message landed. I was really excited when I arrived to view the studio because I discovered that the house was owned by an artist and was a beautifully restored brown stone, the interior was covered in art and sculpture. My studio was a deadly fourth floor walk-up. It was probably no more than five meters square and contained the tiniest shower room off to one side, the kitchen was a wall of cupboards and there was a tiny closet. It had no furniture, so there was really nothing to hate. The one window overlooked the street lined with cherry trees and which ran between 8th Avenue and Riverside Drive. It was beautiful.

Blossom in the spring and the moon on a clear night, it was perfect. As I had so few possessions, the space was fine, and I moved my things in by cab. The futon bed snuggled under the old-fashioned radiator which hissed and clanked like a Gaggia coffee machine.

I got a phone number and installed my answer phone. The best bagel and produce bar, Zabars was just around the corner.

Life was good.

I loved living in this house. The owner had no objection to my idea of painting the wall by my bed in Gold enamel, so along with my tangerine Tibetan silk cushions and some elegant paradise flowers in a tall expensive glass vase, I had made it feel like home. I wrote letters to my friend, telling them how wonderful it is to live in a city where rental places have to be heated and decorated and where there is an endless supply of hot water. These things were unheard of in any of the student houses I had rented in London. I felt as though my standard of living was much higher than I could ever have imagined.

Generally speaking, I walked home, it was a relief to get out of work and discover new neighbourhoods of the city and new cafes or bars that looked worth a visit. My network of friends was growing as each time I went out in the evening I met a friend who introduced me to another group of people and within the space of a few months I had escaped the suffocating company of the only person I had known when I came to NYC, the one who had stolen my job.

It’s much more fun to hang out with people who knew the city and find out what being a young American was really like.

You can’t really underestimate the importance of being single and focused on your career and discovering a city and its people on your own and in your own way. I didn’t want to join the ex-pat group of brits, I had met who were constantly sharing stories about a great café that made proper English food or the real Irish pub or the place which sold Marmite. It seemed to me to miss the point of being here. As we have already ascertained I had come here to run away from my life in London, not to re-create it.

I really enjoyed meeting new people in new places, it gave me the opportunity to play at being the person I wanted to be; confident, independent and secure. It felt so good and people bought it, until of course they found out that this was far from the truth.

I don’t remember who introduced me to Lisa. She was so sharp and witty and full of energy. She was flying high in her career and had a great set of friends with whom she had studied in Boston and who had all drifted down to the city. They were all similarly ambitious, career-focused people. For some reason they accepted me into their social group with ease. Most were in couples, but some were, like me, single. Two of them asked me to go on a date in the same week. Did they have a secret bet? Probably I think, this is an attractive thing for guys, but I was blissfully unaware at the time, so I navigated the dates with caution trying not to overlap or to cause offence or be accused of two-timing. I was much too concerned about hurting anyone’s feelings which is a bad way to go into the dating world. I know now that it is too early in the beginning to worry about these things, the only way to manage this precarious part of life is to just be honest and have fun, I should have counselled my younger self.

I felt such a fraud as I refreshed my perfume, re-applied foundation and painted my lips before leaving work that day. I was meeting Joe, and now I wonder what I thought I would ever have had in common with him. He was a journalist working for the New York City Post, which then, would have been a very prestigious job. The Washington Post, The Boston Globe and the New York city Post were the top three American newspapers, read globally. He was cerebral, thoughtful and slightly tortured, I decided during dinner. The restaurant was beautiful and securing a table there meant waiting weeks or having connections. We drank a reserve Pinot Noir which I had never tasted before and still now, I consider it to be the elite of varieties. I listened to him with interest and hoped he didn’t want me to take a view on anything very much, because I was feeling very inferior. He had an unfathomably deep mind, and a slightly cynical depressed view of the world, but he was kind, gentle and thoughtful. I felt trivial and exposed by comparison.

At the end of the evening we agreed that I would visit his Upper East side apartment on Sunday morning for brunch (I felt so hip to be doing brunch, and I was sure that no-one at home would ever have heard of such an idea!) and then maybe a walk along the water front.

I arrived early on Sunday morning, hoping my spot-cover – cream would survive the blasting on the subway and discovered that Joe had been busy baking bread whilst I had been busy worrying about spots. He was positioning himself as the perfect husband and I think it probably scared me. That together with his open and frank admission of his battles with sadness and not least, his Jewishness, all made me feel out of my depth.

I said goodbye to this lovely, lonely man, knowing that he would never be my lovely man.

In the same week I met a colleague of Lisa’s and a friend of Joe’s. Ian was, in contrast, so much more light-hearted and easy-going. Equally intelligent which is a massive turn on but had a more positive outlook on life. As a Black American, he was also used to being made to feel like an outsider. Joe and I had that in common with him. If Ian felt like that at times, he never let it hold him back. He was on the way up but was constantly aware of the barriers he had to face. I listened to his stories with fascination. His Jamaican inheritance was important to him and he was funny. When he laughed his whole body shook and his faced became beamed as though bursting with energy. His laugh spread happiness and I loved it.

I can’t remember much about the place we met but I remember being flattered and taken by surprise when he asked me to be his girl. It seemed so formal and respectful. I tried to imagine my crazy-East-London-ex asking me the same question and realized how funny that was. The last date I had with him had never happened, he didn’t turn up and months later someone told me that he had had a bad trip on Ecstasy that afternoon and forgotten about me. Charming!

I had really hit rock bottom on the dating front with him.

So, when Ian asked me to be his girl, how could I resist?

Life in New York city suddenly took on a whole new level of interesting. There are areas of the city that you can’t go as a professional white female, much less a solo one, but with a black man, it’s different. Back then, Harlem was a challenge, but with Ian it was fine. We went to see comedy at the Apollo and to hear the famous gospel choirs and we went to eat soul food. There was a café near The Apollo, it was run by an old, traditionally-built and tired looking black woman and it was a mecca with Caribbean people living in the city, it was hard to get a table and it was the antithesis of the Ritzy Manhattan restaurants that I had become used to. From the street, it was indistinguishable from the other shabby store fronts, and inside it was basic, chipped, worn out, Formica tables and chairs. The décor was sparse, the atmosphere was buzzing it was heaving with diners late into the night, every night. People came here to eat the food from their childhood, from their memories of their grandmothers, from their home country.

I had no idea what to order but Ian told me what I couldn’t not order. The food was delicious and I don’t know whether it really was the taste or the anticipation or the millions of calories that made it taste so good, but it didn’t matter. It was great just to share that time.

The scents filling the small space were wonderful. If the atmosphere contributed anything, it was to bring warmth to the concoction of coconut, frangipani, rum, deep fried fish straight from the ocean, and sugar.

Sugar is such a contradictory commodity, sweet and joyful versus toxic and deadly. Capable of bringing so much pleasure and so much pain with its baggage of its colonial history.

I could almost make out the pervasive acrid smell of the burning canes at the end of the season mixed with hibiscus and the sea-mist. The intense, aromatic, unique Island taste, leaving echoes of slavery and Empire. Fried plantain and rich buttery corn bread with rich chocolaty goat curry.

Before I went to live in America, I had never really considered how the British Empire had been responsible for displacing and enslaving a good proportion of the Indian and African continents for its own financial gain, un-opposed for a half century. I had the ignorant and naïve belief that it was Britain who abolished slavery long before the Americans but not that they had been in the game far longer and that immediately had invented a new name for similar diabolical practices renamed as Indentured workers, just as they passed the law to end slavery.

It is so enlightening to see your countries history from the perspective of another country and another culture. It becomes academic but what became deeply personal was the fact that in some ways I was held responsible for the actions of the Empire. This horrified me and I decided that I couldn’t do anything to change perception other than show understanding.

It wasn’t until I went to a funeral with Ian in Harlem that I understood what it felt like to be the odd one out and to feel the stares of those who didn’t think I should be there. It has made a deep impression.

I began to separate missing home into separate things and mainly it was the weather and friends and family. However, it was also the comfort of shared values or at least the perception of this idea. The growth of easier access to information around the world in the last twenty years has probably made this less important. But then, the internet and shared information via social media was in its infancy. Whereas before I came to live in this city, I wanted to escape the familiarity of my past, now I craved it.