

Cymophiliacs: you are one.

by Bradley Hook

Let me guess. You're reading this because it's dark or there's no surf or you're at work dreaming about surf or you're broken in some way that prevents you from surfing.

If I'm right, you depraved little human, then you have come to the right place. Here we can be open about our shared affliction and consider our most personal of problems in an understanding, caring environment.

Meet Daniel. He's 23 and can't stop looking at clouds. When they track across the sky from west to east he loses the ability to concentrate on anything but his desire to know how large the swell is at his local beach.

Daniel stands up nervously, looks at his hand, rubbing forefinger on thumbnail then tucks his bushy blonde fringe behind his ear.

"Hello Daniel" we chorus.

"Hi. I'm Dan and I, I am a cymophiliac. I can't stop thinking about wind and swell... and when I know it's on I just can't do anything much but think about it. "

He quickly sits down, looking at the floor.

Applause. Geoff pats him on the shoulder. We all nod and murmur agreeance.

Samantha begins to stand awkwardly up but we quickly usher her back down. Her leg is all plastered and we can't help but look at her dirty little toes wriggling as she adjusts to a more comfortable position. Samantha is 32 and broke her leg when she fell down a flight of stairs at a party. She has spiralled into a cycle of destructive behaviour since her vice became impractical if not impossible.

"Hello Samantha" we chorus.

"Hey everyone. Thanks. Um, well, as you can see I broke my leg. I was pissed, well, you know. It only has four weeks to go but I've been, you know, doing some stuff I... regret."

She looks at the floor not daring to meet anyone's curious gaze.

"I, you know, hooked up with a few too many guys in the last while and it's made me feel worse and... um. Well, I've been drinking a lot. You know. "

Silence. She scuffs her shoe against the corner of her chair.

"Um, you know. I just feel so lost. I feel fat and stupid and lost. "

Still silence. I look at her and prompt her with widened eyes, nodding reassuringly.

"And I'm a, um, cynophiliac."

"Cy-mo-philiac," I correct.

"A cymophiliac."

Applause and smiles all round. Geoff wonders about the mechanics of 'hooking up' with such a hefty cast in the mix. Dan and I glance at each other. We already know.

It's Geoff's turn. He is older than the rest of us and one might pass him by without realising that he was a champion in his early days. He is holding a photograph, part of which has been removed. The jagged edge of memories lost. Geoff is 47, balding and coughs as he stands up with a vigour that belies his appearance.

"G'day. I'm Geoffrey Rubens and I am a cymophiliac. I have been obsessed for 42 years and counting. When I was 16 I placed second in the nationals against Rabbit Bartholomew. I've been to Hawaii four times and stayed with the Hos."

Dan can't suppress a chuckle. Geoff glances down at him looking momentarily hurt.

"I have a dog called Barbs. Here, I brought a photo."

Geoff holds up the photograph. All that is left from the torn half of the picture is a woman's hand, forever stroking the dog's thick, grey coat.

"Um, Barbs is good girl. She'll sit on the sand all day. We take her up to the dam sometimes, she's a real water lover. She chased the swans one time and nearly got taken by the current. We..."

He pauses and looks at the photo.

"I don't really go to the dam anymore."

There's an awkward silence. Then someone starts a lone clap. We join in. It was you.

It's your turn now. You rise up and look around the room.
Someone coughs and you hear shuffling as Geoff passes the dog
photo to Samantha. You take a deep breath.

Cymo: wave

Philia: to love

