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The Balance Report #001

August 2026

Welcome to the very first edition of **The Balance Report**.

I've been thinking about creating this for a while.

A place for the things that don't quite belong anywhere else.

The observations that are too small for an essay but too interesting to let go. The ideas I keep returning to. Things I've read, watched or noticed. Conversations that have stayed with me. And, of course, finances, business and leadership — because after more than thirty years, I seem incapable of looking at life without seeing them somewhere in the background.

But most of all, I wanted a place to explore **balance**.

Not work-life balance.

Not the perfectly optimized life where everything gets an appropriate number of hours in the calendar.

I mean the kind of balance I find much more interesting.

The balance between what we create and what we receive.

Between responsibility and freedom.

Between knowing when to act and knowing when to leave something alone.

Between who we've been taught to be and who we actually are.

Between building a life and remembering to live it.

There will be no formula for **The Balance Report**.

Some months we might talk about finances. Others about leadership, women, business or life. In this first edition, we're going from Face Reading and the adulthood we never claimed to a nineteenth-century Italian woman who refused to accept that practising law wasn't for her.

Which, now that I think about it, feels like a fairly accurate representation of how my mind works.

So perhaps that's what **The Balance Report** is.

A monthly collection of things I've been thinking about, paying attention to and finding difficult to stop thinking about.

I'm very happy you're here for the first one.

Welcome in.

Anna

The Balance Sheet: Receiving

There is a particular kind of woman I think about often.

She is the one people call when something needs to be solved.

The one who remembers.

The one who anticipates.

The one who keeps things moving when everyone else loses momentum.

At work, she leads.

At home, she organizes.

In relationships, she notices what isn't being said.

She carries responsibility so naturally that people sometimes forget it weighs anything at all.

And most of the time, she can handle it.

That's almost the problem.

Because when you are exceptionally good at carrying things, the world has a tendency to give you more things to carry.

When you are the calm one, people bring you their chaos.

When you are the capable one, people bring you their problems.

When you are the strong one, people assume you don't need anyone to be strong for you.

Eventually, an imbalance appears.

Not necessarily in how much she does.

But in the direction everything flows.

From her.

Her attention.

Her competence.

Her care.

Her energy.

Her love.

Her capacity.

Outward.

Again and again.

And perhaps balance doesn't mean she needs to become less capable.

Perhaps she doesn't need to learn to stop caring, stop leading, stop giving or stop being the person others can rely on.

Perhaps she simply needs somewhere where the current gets to reverse.

A place where she doesn't have to be the strongest person in the room.

Where she doesn't have to know.

Where she doesn't have to anticipate what everyone else needs.

Where she can put down what she carries without worrying that everything will fall apart.

Because strength and receiving were never opposites.

Neither were independence and being supported.

And being held doesn't mean being rescued.

There is an enormous difference between the two.

A powerful woman doesn't need someone to take over her life.

She doesn't need to be treated as fragile.

She doesn't need someone else to make her decisions for her.

But she may need places, relationships and people where she can stop being the one who holds everything together.

Where someone notices her.

Considers her.

Makes room for her.

Where care travels towards her for once.

Maybe it's time for the fighter to be fought for.

For the holder to be held.

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And for the lover to be loved.

Not because she has finally reached the end of her capacity.

Not because she can't do it alone.

But because she shouldn't have to earn receiving by first becoming incapable of giving.

Perhaps that is another kind of balance.

Not giving less.

But learning that you are allowed to receive just as fully.

Something I've noticed

People become calmer when their leader becomes calmer.

I've been noticing this in my own leadership lately.

When I'm stressed, my team becomes stressed.

Not because I tell them to hurry.

Not because I suddenly start demanding more.

Sometimes I don't have to say anything at all.

They feel it.

The pace changes.

Questions become more urgent.

The workload somehow seems to get heavier.

Small problems start feeling bigger.

And when I become calm again, something equally interesting happens.

They calm down too.

The problems haven't necessarily changed.

The workload hasn't disappeared.

The deadlines are still the deadlines.

But the temperature in the room changes.

It has made me think differently about what we transmit as leaders.

We tend to focus on what we communicate through words, decisions, priorities and expectations.

But people are also reading something else.

Us.

They do it consciously. And they pick up on it subconsciously.

How worried do I seem?

How urgent does this feel to me?

Do I trust that we can handle what is in front of us?

Because calm doesn't mean there is nothing difficult happening.

It means I trust our capacity to deal with what is happening.

And perhaps that is one of the quietest forms of leadership.

Not convincing everyone that everything is fine.

But showing them, through your own presence:

We can handle this.

Face Reading:

The Adulthood We Never Claimed

There is a line in Face Reading connected to the age of 80, that traditionally is associated with the fear of death.

As I started observing this line in so many women, in all different ages, I became less and less convinced of the interpretation. Because I often saw something slightly different.

Not necessarily a fear of dying.

A fear of ageing.

Of losing beauty.

Losing desirability.

Losing relevance.

Of looking in the mirror one day and no longer recognizing the woman the world once responded to.

And that interpretation made sense to me.

We live in a culture that has a complicated relationship with ageing, particularly female ageing.

Youth is celebrated. Beauty is rewarded. Women learn remarkably early that part of their value lies in how the world sees them.

So perhaps the line wasn't about death at all.

Perhaps it was about the slow disappearance of the identity we had learned to rely on.

But lately, I've started to wonder if even that interpretation doesn't go deep enough.

Perhaps it isn't really about death.

And perhaps it isn't really about ageing either.

Perhaps it is about **maturity**.

We never really arrive

There is something strange about the way we become adults in modern Western society.

We don't.
Not really.

There is no moment when the people around us gather and say:
You are one of us now.

You become legally responsible at a certain age.
You graduate.
You get a job.
You move to your own place.

Perhaps you marry, have children, buy a house, build a company,
become responsible for employees, manage millions, sit in boardrooms.

But where is the threshold?

Where is the moment when childhood ends and adulthood begins?

In many cultures, rites of passage have historically served exactly this purpose.

There was a before and an after.
You crossed something.
And when you returned, you returned differently.

Not because you had magically acquired all the answers, but because
your relationship to yourself and your community had changed.

You were no longer preparing to become an adult.
You were one.

I wonder what happens to us when that threshold disappears.

Because I meet an extraordinary number of highly capable adults who

still seem to be waiting for permission.

Women who run businesses but wonder what people will think if they change direction.

Women who lead teams but need someone else to confirm that the decision they already know is right really is right.

Women who are financially independent but still organize their lives around expectations they never consciously chose.

Women who have their own kids, even teenagers, who are still silently waiting for their own mother's acceptance.

Women in their forties, fifties and sixties who still hear some version of:
What will they think of me?
And obey it.

We may have left our childhood homes decades ago.

But psychologically, many of us are still standing in the hallway waiting for someone to tell us we're allowed to leave.

The invisible audience

Children have to orient themselves around other people.

They have to.

Their survival depends on belonging.
They learn to read the room.

Is this acceptable?
Am I safe?
Are they pleased with me?
Did I do it right?
Will I still belong if I do this?

These are intelligent questions for a child.

But something is supposed to happen as we become adults.
The authority is supposed to move.
From outside of us to inside of us.

We begin to understand that other people can dislike our decisions
without our decisions being wrong.

That someone can be disappointed in us and we can survive it.

That belonging bought through self-abandonment isn't really belonging.

That our parents, teachers, partners, colleagues, clients and
communities are simply other adults.

They have opinions.

So do we.

And perhaps this is the rite of passage we're missing.

Not becoming fearless.

Not becoming certain.

But realizing that **no one is coming to grant us adulthood.**

We have to claim it.

And then I returned to the line

Which made me look at that Face Reading line differently again.

What if the fear underneath it isn't simply:
I don't want to die.

Or even:
I don't want to become old and invisible.

What if part of what we fear about ageing is that time keeps moving
whether or not we have fully stepped into our own lives?

Because ageing confronts us with something youth allows us to postpone.

Eventually, there is no future version of you coming to take over.

No wiser, more confident woman who will suddenly appear and start making the decisions.

No authority arriving to tell you that you've done enough preparation.

No moment when everyone finally agrees that you're allowed to live exactly as you choose.

There is only you.
And there always was.

Perhaps that is why ageing can feel so confronting.

Not because our faces change.

But because time makes it increasingly difficult to maintain the illusion that our real life is still waiting somewhere ahead of us.

Maybe we need our own rite of passage

Maybe adulthood isn't something that happens to us at eighteen.

Maybe it is something we consciously choose.

A moment when we decide:

I am no longer living my life as though there is an invisible panel of judges evaluating my choices.

I don't need everyone to understand.

I don't need everyone to approve.

I can listen to advice without surrendering authority.

I can disappoint someone and remain a good person.

I can disappoint someone and remain a good person.
I can change my mind.
I can want something simply because I want it.
I can choose.
And I can live with the consequences of what I choose.

That last is important.

Because sovereignty isn't doing whatever you want and expecting the world to accommodate you.

It is taking responsibility for your own life.

Fully.

Perhaps that is what becoming an adult actually is.

Not independence from other people.

But independence from the belief that other people should be the final authority on who you are allowed to become.

And maybe the line I once thought was about the fear of death — and then the fear of ageing — has been telling a much bigger story all along.

The fear that time will pass before we have fully claimed our own lives.

Maybe the answer isn't to stop ageing.

Maybe it's to finally grow up.

The Reading Nook: Lidia Poët

I have completely fallen in love with *The Law According to Lidia Poët*.

Not just because it is beautiful to look at.

Not just because Lidia smokes, drinks, takes lovers and refuses to behave in the way a woman in Turin in the 1880's is supposed to behave.

Not just because it's based on a true story.

Not just because of the magnetic love between her and Jacopo and their shared mission to tell the truth, whether through the press or the law.

Although, admittedly, that helped.

I think what captivated me most about Lidia is that she never waits for the world to be ready for her.

She wants to practise law.
Society says she cannot.
She does it anyway.

Again and again, she walks into rooms that weren't built for her and behaves as though her presence there is the most natural thing in the world.

Eventually, the world has no choice but to adjust.

And watching her made me think of those words:

Here's to strong women.

May we know them.

May we be them.

May we raise them.

We often talk about strong women as though strength were an individual characteristic.

Something a woman possesses.

But perhaps strength also travels between generations.

We borrow courage from the women who came before us.
We normalize possibilities for the women standing beside us.
And we make certain battles unnecessary for the women who come after us.

That last part is important to me.

Because the goal cannot be for every generation of women to prove, once again, that we are capable.

At some point, what was once considered radical should simply become normal.

A woman practising law.

A woman leading a company.

A woman making her own money.

A woman choosing not to marry.

A woman choosing to marry.

A woman leaving.

A woman staying.

A woman wanting more.

A woman changing her mind.

A woman designing a life that makes absolutely no sense to anyone but her.

The women before us pushed against doors that were locked.

Some of us inherited doors already standing open.

Part of our responsibility is to leave them even wider.

Not only for our daughters and granddaughters.

But for each other.

There is something deeply powerful about watching another woman live fully in her own authority.

It expands our understanding of what is possible.

Maybe that's one of the reasons I became so taken with Lidia Poët.

...maybe that's one of the reasons I became so taken with Linda Scott.

She doesn't spend her life asking whether she is allowed.

She simply keeps becoming more herself until the world around her has to make room. And by doing that, she opens doors for women around her and women walking in her footsteps.

Here's to those women.

May we know them.

May we be them.

And may the women who come after us wonder why any of it was ever considered remarkable.

Closing notes

If there is a thread running through this first Balance Report, perhaps it is this:

You get to belong to yourself.

You get to make decisions other people don't understand.

You get to stop waiting for permission.

You get to be powerful without always having to be strong.

You get to receive without first proving how much you can carry.

And you get to trust that not everything needs to be pushed, fixed or controlled.

Some things need action.

Some need courage.

Some need time.

And some simply need enough space to unfold.

Thank you for spending a little of your time here with me.

I don't know exactly what future editions of The Balance Report will contain yet and I rather like it that way.

We'll see what catches my attention between now and then.

Until next month,

Anna

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