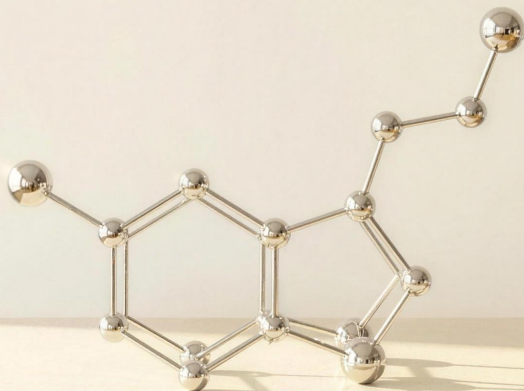


THRILLHO

SEROTONIN



The Molecule of Enough

transcribed, with the usual two-second delay

There is a belief, held by roughly everyone, that serotonin is the happiness chemical. This belief is wrong in the way most load-bearing beliefs are wrong: comfortably, at scale, and on a T-shirt.

Here is what it actually is. Serotonin — 5-hydroxytryptamine to its enemies — is a small molecule your body builds out of tryptophan, an ingredient you cannot manufacture yourself and must eat, like a species that was shipped without batteries. And here is the first joke, which the Doctor rates highly: roughly ninety percent of the serotonin in you is not in your brain at all. It is in your gut, operating the plumbing. The chemical you have been taught to associate with bliss, with sunsets, with love — is, statistically, almost entirely employed moving lunch along a tube. The Doctor finds this the single most dignified fact about human beings. Your ecstasy molecule has a day job, and the day job is digestion, and it does not complain.



The fraction that reaches the brain is issued by a few hundred thousand neurons in the brainstem — a custodial staff, essentially, wiring a city of a hundred billion. And what they regulate is not joy. It is enough. Serotonin is the chemistry of satiety, of patience, of the search being over. It is the molecule that says: you may stop now. You have eaten sufficiently, waited long enough, arrived. At night it is quietly promoted into melatonin and sent to run the sleep shift — same molecule, different hat.¹ It sets your temperature. It clots your blood. It is, start to finish, the biochemistry of your needs are met.

Which is the entire problem, and the entire album.

Because the Doctor was commissioned to make a serotonin record, and a serotonin record is a dance record, and dance records are engineered for the opposite molecule. Dancing is wanting — more bass, more night, one more, again — and wanting is dopamine, the chemistry of the almost, of the taxi that has not yet pulled up. He had been asked, in effect, to build a machine that manufactures contentment using the exact tool a person reaches for when they are not content. He ran the numbers. The numbers said it could not be done. He built it anyway; he keeps the numbers framed, next to the diploma, which under magnification is a small drawing of a smiling dog.

How it fails: you cannot dance your way to enough, because the dancing is the wanting, and the wanting is the other chemical entirely. Every euphoric drop on this record is, pharmacologically, a lie about which neurotransmitter is in the room.

How it succeeds: for three and a half minutes, sometimes, a person on a floor stops checking whether they ought to be somewhere else. Their needs are met and they have — briefly, miraculously — forgotten to be worried about it. That is serotonin. That is the whole finding. The Doctor rounds his lecture-success rate, charitably, to nothing, and builds the sound system instead.

A word on the words. You will notice this booklet does not contain them. This is not an oversight; it is a compliment, to you and to the songs. These lyrics are simple on purpose — love your life, we play, make out in the hot tub — and they mean exactly what they say, the way serotonin means exactly what it says, which is this is enough, please stop reading and dance. Printing them would be like printing the ingredients of water.

There is one exception. Track five is in Japanese, titled 巨乳ハンター, which the Doctor renders as Big Boobs Buster, after the obscure and — he insists, and he has run the numbers — genuinely well-made Japanese comedy of the same name. That one you cannot follow



without help, and the Doctor considers this its own small serotonin event: the specific pleasure of a thing exactly as silly as it is well made. He loves it the way he loves a small dog barking at its reflection. He turned the music up.

— *Dr. Thrillho, as told to SOAM*
O N E H A N D C L A P P I N G R E C O R D S

¹ Melatonin is what serotonin does after dark. The Doctor notes that the molecule you thank for your best afternoon and the one you blame for your worst 3 a.m. are the same substance, working overtime. He has written four songs about this. They are all bangers.

