Paper cuts from dull scissors

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Carte blanche

I took 3 months off between jobs. I told myself it was rest. It was mostly a collapse I called a break.

Some context. When I quit my first job in 2024, I was younger. Had less to show. Still closed 4 competing offers from big companies inside a few weeks. In 2026, with 10 years of work behind me and much more to point at, it went the other way. Fewer jobs. 9/10 hiring managers with no idea what they were actually hiring for. Interviews stalled after a couple of rounds. Postings quietly disappeared. Weeks between callbacks. Final rounds that ghosted.

Dull scissors

A Series A founder took me through a full loop. Floated a split-reporting arrangement for the marketing team, then went dark. Came back with a consulting proposal a few weeks later. Went dark again. Another founder came in from a cold email I'd sent, took me through 5 rounds, verbally closed me, then went dark. HR emailed a week later saying they couldn't disburse the offer. Every second week, another final round that never came back. Different intensities of the same paper cut, layering on. All of them from dull scissors.

A collapse I called a break

Then the cuts I started giving myself. I woke up at noon and slept at 4 a.m. Numbed out on movies and video games. Went to the gym religiously because it helped me illusion that I'd done something productive that day. Kept LinkedIn open as a single tab. Refreshed it just to check the wound. Stopped writing on my own site. That last one is the one I moved past too quickly the first time I tried to write this. My site is where I live. It's the version of me that exists whether a job does or not. There was a stretch of weeks where I couldn't open the editor. I told myself my body and mind had been working for almost a decade straight and I'd earned this break from everything. It was a collapse I called a break.

Pilot light

And yet - on the days motivation showed up - I built tools. Interview Recon, Rainmaker. Small things I shipped for other people navigating the same hunt I couldn't get out of myself. Couldn't open my own site but could ship a project for strangers doing what I was doing. Didn't notice it at the time. Looked like normal side-project weekends. Something in me was still building. That was the piece I hadn't lost.

The turn

The turn came when those tools came back for me. The war-rooms I'd built inside Interview Recon started prepping me for my own interviews. Rounds started going well. I began sending custom pre-reads before interviews. For HCLTech, I built a small Sarvam-powered voice bot that would embed into their site and replace their contact forms. Sent it as my intro. Nobody had asked for it. That's when I knew I still had the mojo. Showing up with things nobody asked for was the tell. The tools I'd shipped for other people while I was under the collapse were what pulled me out of it.

What outlasts

Everyone's mental topography is different. It'll probably never be trained by a model. That's the closest thing to a thesis I've got out of the 3 months. Career is long. Life is longer. Both are solo games. Jobs are means to ends. My identity had always been tied to whatever job I was doing. I now know better. Side projects, connections, curiosity - those are the assets that compound. Mine did, because I'd been paying into them for a decade without calling it investment.

Paper cuts from dull scissors. Don't die by a thousand of them. You've got one life.