

OK Computer by Radiohead



Total Songs: 12

Airbag

Airbag Lyrics[Verse 1]

In the next world war

In a jackknifed juggernaut

I am born again

In the neon sign

Scrolling up and down

I am born again

[Chorus]

In an interstellar burst

I'm back to save the universe

[Verse 2]

In a deep, deep sleep

Of the innocent

I am born again

In a fast German car

I'm amazed that I survived

An airbag saved my life

[Chorus]

In an interstellar burst

I am back to save the universe

In an interstellar burst

I am back to save the universe

In an interstellar burst

I am back to save the universe⁴³Embed

In the neon sign

Scrolling up and down

ANNOTATION:

<https://images.genius.com/f78fd6f27bffcd64803702e52f6e4f50.220x220x38.gif>

Neon signs are a common sight in densely-populated urban areas; their purpose is usually to advertise a place of business or otherwise grab the attention of passerbys with their flashy colors and dynamic, sometimes "scrolling" text.

[Chorus]

In an interstellar burst

I'm back to save the universe

ANNOTATION:

Thom Yorke, the lead singer, told [Select in 1997](#):

[...] every time you have a near accident, instead of just sighing and carrying on, you should pull over, get out of the car and run down the street screaming "I'm BACK! I'm ALIVE! My life has started again today!"

In the chorus of the song, he is describing this feeling exactly: being filled with overwhelming energy from "being reborn" after the car wreck. It is even taken to a next level, with the speaker seeing himself almost messiah-like with powers to save the whole universe now.

This feeling is also reminiscent of a track that appears later on on [the album, 'Lucky'](#). There, Thom Yorke [feels like a superhero after surviving a plane crash](#).

In the next world war

In a jackknifed juggernaut

ANNOTATION:

While *juggernaut* is described as a large unstoppable force, campaign, movement, or object, it may also refer to a semi-trailer truck.

It being a *jackknifed* juggernaut paints the vehicle as being bent or folded into the shape of a pocket knife.

The line is an allusion to Thom Yorke's own [car accident](#), one of the big inspirations for the song itself.

<https://images.genius.com/005235eb26de05c07b159e901532303b.1000x563x1.jpg>

In a deep, deep sleep

Of the innocent

ANNOTATION:

In 2016, a book donated by Thom Yorke to the [Oxfam charity](#) revealed sketches of the lyrics to this song. The book was William Blake's [Songs of Innocence and Experience](#).

The beginning of the second verse appears in the margins of 1789's poem "[A Cradle Song](#)," a poem about a mother singing an innocent child to sleep.

<http://images.genius.com/e4eddcfc054717e2278a8fbcc3ba5015.562x1000x1.jpg>

This poem seems to take place after a devastating experience, the narrator feels reborn as an innocent child, or sings to himself, trying to convince himself of such. The conclusion being that innocence and experience may not always be opposites.

In a fast German car

I'm amazed that I survived
An airbag saved my life

ANNOTATION:

In 1987, Thom Yorke was in a car accident which nearly took his life.

Thom said in an [interview](#) in [Select Magazine](#):

Every time you have a near accident, instead of just sighing and carrying on, you should pull over, get out of the car and run down the street screaming, 'I'm BACK! I'm ALIVE! My life has started again today!'

I am born again

ANNOTATION:

[Reincarnation](#) and renewal are prevalent themes in this song. The narrator, [Thom Yorke](#), is beginning to realize that he is different and a better person following his [traumatic car crash](#).

Paranoid Android

Paranoid Android Lyrics[Verse 1]
Please, could you stop the noise?
I'm trying to get some rest
From all the unborn chicken voices
In my head

[Chorus]
What's that?
(I may be paranoid, but not an android)
What's that?
(I may be paranoid, but not an android)
[Verse 2]
When I am king

You will be first against the wall
 With your opinion
 Which is of no consequence at all

[Chorus]

What's that?
 (I may be paranoid, but no android)
 What's that?
 (I may be paranoid, but no android)

[Bridge 1]

Ambition makes you look pretty ugly
 Kicking, squealing, Gucci little piggy
 You don't remember, you don't remember
 Why don't you remember my name?
 Off with his head, man, off with his head, man
 Why don't you remember my name?
 I guess he does

[Bridge 2]

Rain down, rain down
 Come on, rain down on me
 From a great height
 From a great height, height
 Rain down, rain down
 Come on, rain down on me
 From a great height
 From a great height, height
 That's it, sir, you're leaving (Rain down)
 The crackle of pigskin (Rain down)
 The dust and the screaming (Come on, rain down)
 The yuppies networking (On me)
 The panic, the vomit (From a great height)
 The panic, the vomit (From a great height)
 God loves his children
 God loves his children, yeah

Ambition makes you look pretty ugly

Kicking, squealing, Gucci little piggy

ANNOTATION:

In many countries clear displays of ambition are distasteful and to be avoided. The image of a "Gucci little piggy" kicking and squealing captures the revulsion and embarrassment many feel after seeing one debase oneself in this way. Gucci is a designer brand often worn as an ostentatious display of status, and a pig is a stereotypically dirty creature that wallows in its own filth. Here, it may be referring to a specific individual.

<https://images.genius.com/c8c29426d7481ae52abbe235f4d62789.900x583x1.jpg>

God loves his children

God loves his children, yeah

ANNOTATION:

The song finally ends in a sarcastic and magnificent way: "God, the creator of all human kind in His own image", loves ALL of his children. Even those who Thom might find grotesque.

In the embryonic state of the song, during the first tours in 1996, Thom used to sing a variation of the actual ending, [singing](#):

God loves his children
That's why he kills em', yeah

This gives the song a much more aggressive and literal ending.

The way this could be interpreted with the "sad robot" as our protagonist is also worth mentioning. God, indeed, loves his children, but would God consider a machine as his child? In this version, the character decides that he is unloved by God, spiraling into rage and confusion. This rush of angst could be represented by the ending guitar solo.

Rain down, rain down

Come on, rain down on me
From a great height
From a great height, height
Rain down, rain down
Come on, rain down on me
From a great height
From a great height, height

ANNOTATION:

This may be in reference to the story of [Noah's Ark](#) in the Bible.

This could also reference the monologue given by Roy Batty in Ridley Scott's [Blade Runner](#):

<https://youtu.be/HU7Ga7qTLDU?t=56>

It could also be a reference to the talking of the dull people, talking on and on. The instrumental then solo's represent the chaotic gibberish of dull people - "jalala bla bla bla" can be heard in the background. The 'rain down' bit is a resignation to the fact that they can't be stopped.

You don't remember, you don't remember

Why don't you remember my name?
Off with his head, man, off with his head, man
Why don't you remember my name?
I guess he does

ANNOTATION:

At this hectic and uptempo point in the song, the narrator expresses frustration at the notion of being forgotten, or just ["another cog in the machine."](#) As Android grows passionate to the point of violence, the time signature abruptly switches between 4/4 and 7/8; an auditory match for the confusion and unrest of being dehumanized to the point of namelessness.

Here's where Yorke's 'Paranoid Android' starts to really diverge from the original [Marvin the Paranoid Android](#). In [The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy](#), there's a running gag that Marvin is forgotten or ignored in increasingly cruel ways, but he never lashes out against the humans---in fact, he prevents a galactic war by convincing the ultra-violent [Krikkitt](#) supercomputer to commit suicide. Yorke's Android, on the other hand, submits to these violent urges.

Meanwhile, "off with his head" is similar to the Queen of Hearts' trademark exclamation from 1951's [Alice in Wonderland](#):

<https://images.genius.com/3cc0df8112bcc896d4b8b20c348a421d.400x300x20.gif>

What's that?

(I may be paranoid, but not an android)

What's that?

(I may be paranoid, but not an android)

ANNOTATION:

Yorke has said of the title "Paranoid Android":

I mean, the title was chosen as a joke. It was like, 'Oh, I'm so depressed.' And I just thought, that's great. That's how people would LIKE me to be.

-- From [Jam! Showbiz](#), 1997

This suggests how Yorke views the narrator: A depressed and depressing drag on everybody else. A miserable figure in a bar full of people trying to have a good time. The fact that this is (sort of) a joke is highlighted by the obvious reference to the humorous [Douglas Adams](#) series [The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy](#) and more specifically [Marvin the paranoid android](#).

<http://images.rapgenius.com/fdc5aa624f4c248441473755105d3f86.411x360x1.jpg>

Marvin is the robot aboard the starship Heart of Gold. He is afflicted with severe depression and boredom, in part because he has a [brain the size of a planet](#) which he is seldom, if ever, given the chance to use.

Please, could you stop the noise?

I'm trying to get some rest

From all the unborn chicken voices

In my head

ANNOTATION:

<http://images.rapgenius.com/4f57d71ddbcdb2fc4066913591a7e913.451x296x1.jpg>

Yorke has said that the lyrics are based on an unpleasant experience in a noisy bar. As the subsequent lyrics show, however, that's just a jumping-off point. As he often does, Yorke has abstracted the experience that he had in the bar and used it as inspiration for a song with more general meaning. In "Paranoid Android" (and much of *OK Computer*) Yorke describes an emotional landscape of paranoia and confusion created by modern urban life and interactions with strangers.

One interpretation is that the voices represent an *internal* conflict and the noise around him only seems to exacerbate a preexisting problem. After all, "unborn" is another way of saying not brought into existence; "chicken" is another word for coward; and "voice" is a synonym for opinion or input.^[SEP] Basically, the narrator is asking to take a break from all the words/views he's too scared to express ([maybe fascist-like thoughts of acting like a dictator](#)), so they're still in his head and he regrets it.

A similar imagery had been used in [Street Spirit \(Fade Out\)](#), which compels many to associate these lines with Thom Yorke's veganism.

With your opinion

Which is of no consequence at all

ANNOTATION:

While it may appear as if Yorke is showing off his trademark cynicism, saying that you'll die with all your worthless thoughts about worthless things, he's [said](#) that this is the character of the song talking, and reflects the opposite of how he feels:

Again, that's just a joke. It's actually the other way around – it's actually **my** opinion that is of no consequence at all."

<http://images.rapgenius.com/818cf300bbf58c4833d1db6b6563d89c.1000x625x1.jpg>

When I am king

You will be first against the wall

ANNOTATION:

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy describes the Marketing Department of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation as: "A bunch of mindless jerks who'll be the first against the wall when the revolution comes."

Curiously, an edition of the Encyclopedia Galactica which conveniently fell through a rift in the time-space continuum from 1000 years in the future describes the Marketing Department of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation as: "A bunch of mindless jerks who were the first against the wall when the revolution came."

--[Douglas Adams](#)

In the Hitchhikers books and shows, **Marvin the Paranoid Android** is Sirius's most prominent achievement.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/ac623d4bbd32970d6b98544a0bf8fba7.490x315x1.jpg>

This line also explores the idea of petty revenge. By giving the line as a one off comment it acts as a retort from Thom Yorke, possibly in the past, to those he dislikes in a very juvenile way by implying he may not be able to do something now but he will be able to and then they'll regret it.

Subterranean Homesick Alien

Subterranean Homesick Alien Lyrics[Verse 1]

The breath of the morning I keep forgetting
 The smell of the warm summer air
 I live in a town where you can't smell a thing
 You watch your feet for cracks in the pavement
 Up above aliens hover
 Making home movies for the folks back home
 Of all these weird creatures who lock up their spirits
 Drill holes in themselves and live for their secrets

[Chorus]

They're all uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight

[Verse 2]

I wish that they'd swoop down in a country lane
 Late at night when I'm driving
 Take me on board their beautiful ship
 Show me the world as I'd love to see it
 I'd tell all my friends but they'd never believe me
 They'd think that I'd finally lost it completely
 I'd show them the stars and the meaning of life
 They'd shut me away but I'd be alright, alright
 Mom, I'm alright, alright

[Chorus]

I'm just uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight
 Uptight32Embed

I'm just uptight, uptight

Uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight
 Uptight, uptight
 Uptight

ANNOTATION:

The narrator has a breakthrough now, after being abducted by the aliens and seeing earth and life in general, from a different perspective, he now knows he is like any other person he knows and hates. as said above, "they're all uptight", now he finds out he's not much different. he's uptight as well, he's like them.

I'd tell all my friends but they'd never believe me

They'd think that I'd finally lost it completely
 I'd show them the stars and the meaning of life
 They'd shut me away but I'd be alright, alright
 Mom, I'm alright, alright

ANNOTATION:

Thom Yorke may need some new friends, potentially some alien ones!

Thom is portraying his "friends" as [cogs in the machine](#) who are unable to grasp anything further than the trivial aspects of human existence. They're being presented with the true meaning of life, yet they're blinded by their [uncleansed doors of perception](#) and complacency.

Thom also seems to be referencing these lyrics from earlier in the track:

Of all these weird creatures who lock up their spirits

Thom himself is locking up his spirits -- or, in this case, his enthusiasm for a newfound perspective of human life -- in an attempt to portray himself as a completely normal, functioning member of a society in which he has grown distant. He has ultimately become the type of person he dreads the most.

Show me the world as I'd love to see it

ANNOTATION:

Thom would finally see the world as aliens see it: viewing everything holistically, contrary to the world view that a majority of people have nowadays, which embraces major focus on the individual.

Importantly, furthermore Thom would be able to view the world purely as an observer, meaning he wouldn't just be engrossed in his own small life, but rather free from the many outside influences that affect our everyday thought processes.

I wish that they'd swoop down in a country lane

Late at night when I'm driving
Take me on board their beautiful ship

ANNOTATION:

This is a description of a classic alien abduction narrative. The narrator clearly wants to leave the polluted and stagnant town he's describing, and instead wants to go with the aliens that he was making reference to earlier. Considering that the humans are 'locking up their spirits; and drilling holes in themselves' he has more in common with the aliens than humans.

Up above aliens hover

Making home movies for the folks back home

ANNOTATION:

A "[home movie](#)" is one typically made with a handheld camera to capture a family moment or event. The best example of this would be the long-running TV series [America's Funniest Home Videos](#). These lines suggest that aliens might see humans as regular entertainment.

This is one of several examples of Thom Yorke's sense of humor found throughout *OK Computer*. For instance, "[Karma Police](#)" also touches on ironic subject matter:

Karma police, arrest this girl
Her Hitler hairdo is making me feel ill
And we have crashed her party

I live in a town where you can't smell a thing

ANNOTATION:

This may refer to someone living in a very polluted area or manufacturing town. The people have become so accustomed to living in bad areas that they don't realize there is anything better; they have conformed to their surroundings.

You watch your feet for cracks in the pavement

ANNOTATION:

The narrator lives in a town where people don't interact much socially, they keep their heads down rather than acknowledging one another. This could also refer to the old adage/superstition "[step on a crack, break your mother's back](#)." These people are seemingly too timid to question the saying.

The imagery provided here can also be metaphorical. The "cracks in the pavement" might allude to holes in what is knowable or concrete. Additionally, the image of people looking down at their feet has a pessimistic connotation.

Of all these weird creatures who lock up their spirits

Drill holes in themselves and live for their secrets

ANNOTATION:

This is a caricature of how aliens would see us living from up above. We lock up our spirits by sometimes hiding who we are to fit in. "Drill holes in themselves" probably alludes to how much we hurt ourselves through things like drugs, alcohol, eating bad food, and making stupid decisions. "Live for their secrets" is an allusion to how we, as human beings, are susceptible to things like gossip and suspicion.

Exit Music (For A Film)

Exit Music (For A Film) Lyrics[Verse 1]

Wake from your sleep
The drying of your tears
Today we escape, we escape

[Verse 2]

Pack and get dressed
Before your father hears us
Before all hell breaks loose

[Verse 3]

Breathe, keep breathing
Don't lose your nerve
Breathe, keep breathing
I can't do this alone

[Verse 4]

Sing us a song
A song to keep us warm
There's such a chill
Such a chill

[Verse 5]

And you can laugh a spineless laugh
We hope your rules and wisdom choke you
Now we are one in everlasting peace
We hope that you choke, that you choke

[Outro]

We hope that you choke
That you choke
We hope that you choke
That you choke

We hope that you choke

That you choke
We hope that you choke
That you choke

ANNOTATION:

This line links back to the original story of Romeo and Juliet where in the end they poison themselves.

However as this song is about the two lovers escaping, Thom Yorke spins this idea around and has them wish a similar fate on those who tried to prevent this escape from happening.

The sentence was widely used in the band's memorabilia and artwork at the time the record was released, sometimes given the idea of a mantra someone powerless may sing against their enemies. They'd have to die through their own actions, not through a direct attack.

<https://images.genius.com/430064943ccb6f485d7c9662a458cf23.400x300x1.jpg>

It also contrasts a previous line where Thom Yorke sings:

[Breathe, keep breathing](#)
[Don't lose your nerve](#)
[Breathe, keep breathing](#)
[I can't do this alone](#)

Today we escape, we escape

ANNOTATION:

The narrator realizes now is the time to leave their previous lives behind and venture together into the unknown. Since this track was composed for the movie [Romeo + Juliet](#) this might refer to the story's ending, where their deaths can be interpreted as a way to escape the horrible consequences their love for each other would have brought upon them.

We hope that you choke, that you choke

ANNOTATION:

This line links back to the original story of Romeo and Juliet where in the end they poison themselves.

However as this song is about the two lovers escaping, Thom Yorke spins this idea around and has them wish a similar fate on those who tried to prevent this escape from happening.

It also contrasts a previous line where Thom Yorke sings:

[Breathe, keep breathing](#)
[Don't lose your nerve](#)
[Breathe, keep breathing](#)
[I can't do this alone](#)

Sing us a song

A song to keep us warm

ANNOTATION:

<http://images.genius.com/c41d755381d4bd8c38d3247c48b93b5f.1000x820x1.jpg>

Obviously, a song cannot keep one warm (at least not physically); that's preposterous. This is sung in an abstract sense.

A "warm" song is a happy song; a lullaby; something, anything from someone else to ease the numbing, harsh, cold reality. It's desperation bordering on metaphorical detachment with reality.

Pack and get dressed

Before your father hears us

Before all hell breaks loose

ANNOTATION:

<http://images.genius.com/b950558949ceb1bf38b64335b91b077f.1000x500x1.jpg>

This imagery, seemingly straight out of a romantic movie scene, could have a double meaning:

1. Most obviously, it's referring to the father hearing them, violently interjecting, possibly preventing their escape.
2. The song's ominous tone combined with the album's themes of paranoia and collapse suggest hell breaking loose could be something much larger, more overwhelming, societal, systemic, horrible, and inescapable. In this case, an escape would be futile.

Either way, it represents a teenage-like defiance of cultural norms. This song, after all, is directly connected to *Romeo + Juliet*.

We hope your rules and wisdom choke you

ANNOTATION:

He expresses his contempt for the status quo of the adult world from the perspective of the two young lovers (Romeo + Juliet).

The two families' conflict in the play are what cause the deaths of their children. He is mocking their false "wisdom", hoping that they suffer for their wrongdoings and not being able to look past their conflicts even if it was in the best interests of their respective children.

This line is also mocking traditional social norms, saying that people are so afraid to move away from conventional "rules and wisdom," and that their refusal to change and constant conformity will choke them. This expresses a general hope of young people, uncompromised by social rules, to live freely and follow their feelings. As we know from the story of Romeo and Juliet, the two young lovers are not willing to obey and choose death instead.

And you can laugh a spineless laugh

ANNOTATION:

When the two lovers leave they know they'll be mocked, but it will mean nothing to them. A spineless laugh is one of fear and weakness, so the joke is on whoever discredits them when they've gone.

<http://images.genius.com/7e79f6d687fea28cda1426a80ac79a87.700x394x29.gif>

There's such a chill

Such a chill

ANNOTATION:

A premonition of the future possibly stemming from the realization that their situation is hopeless, but also a simple acknowledgment of their bleak environment. Notice that as this is sung a cymbal slowly rattles as if to imply the action of shivering.

Now we are one in everlasting peace

ANNOTATION:

This line highlights the tragic ending of ["Romeo and Juliet"](#), the untimely death of two lovers due to confusing circumstances. Yorke's take on the play and its concept of unity via death is that it's ultimately a naive tragedy. He elaborates saying,

It's about two people who can't be together and are naïve and young enough to believe that they'll go see each other in the next life so they choose to go there."

The effect is amplified by the musical structure; [Nadine Hubbs' "The Imagination of Pop-Rock Criticism"](#) explains the resolution of voices that lends additional meaning to the line:

The vocal ascent (F#, A#, E, F#) at the end of section C, in scaling its climactic peak, also achieves a dazzling unification of the two (implied) voices previously distinct throughout the section. For here the interlocking elements that had defined these voices' discrete identities -- their separate registral terrains and step-wise voice-leading trajectories -- are confounded and thus merged: the highest reached in the gesture E - F#, link up (as an octave displaced lower-neighbor embellishment of F#) with the lower voice leading strand. And this musical union of two voices further resonates with the narrative's union of two souls, proclaimed immediately in the final refrain. *Thus we learn, following the dramatic conflict and climax, that the "exit" foretold in the song's title has been achieved, and the two lovers are joined in eternity. Their single voice, now strong and sustained, soars perpetually in the transcendent realm of the upper register.*

[Verse 1]

ANNOTATION:

The song was written specifically for the soundtrack of ["Romeo and Juliet"](#), and the band did their homework. They employ Baroque techniques to emphasize a strain through melancholy into triumph. Nadine Hubbs' ["The Imagination of Pop-Rock Criticism"](#) walks us through the musicality:

The eight bar refrain of "Exit Music", is in its "pitch-rhythm structure" a *Baroque lament formula*, performed with quiet deliberateness and restraint. It presents a B-Minor ground bass proceeding by measured but inevitable chromatic descent to V, and then moving toward drawn out resolution -- on a tonic chord clouded for two beats by the voices suspended ninth (which resolves normally to the octave) and for a full bar by a suspended fourth whose eventual descent to a raised third suggests redemption, or perhaps transcendence, in the stanza's final moments

Let Down

Let Down Lyrics[Verse 1]

Transport, motorways and tramlines

Starting and then stopping

Taking off and landing

The emptiest of feelings

Disappointed people

Clinging on to bottles

And when it comes it's so, so disappointing

[Chorus]

Let down and hanging around

Crushed like a bug in the ground

Let down and hanging around

[Verse 2]

Shell smashed, juices flowing
Wings twitch, legs are going
Don't get sentimental
It always ends up drivin'

[Pre-Chorus]

One day I am gonna grow wings
A chemical reaction
Hysterical and useless
Hysterical and

[Chorus]

Let down and hanging around
Crushed like a bug in the ground
Let down and hanging around

[Bridge]

Let down again
Let down again
Let down again

[Verse 3]

You know, you know where you are with
You know where you are with
Floor collapsing
Floating, bouncing back

[Pre-Chorus]

And one day
I am gonna grow wings
A chemical reaction
(You know where you are)
Hysterical and useless
(You know where you are)
Hysterical and
(You know where you are)

[Chorus]

Let down and hanging around
Crushed like a bug in the ground
Let down and hanging around

Floor collapsing

Floating, bouncing back

ANNOTATION:

the previous optimism showed in the first lines of the pre-chorus completely gone, his sadness has shot back and the happiness has collapsed

Let down again

Let down again
Let down again

ANNOTATION:

Continuing with the pattern of optimism followed by pessimism. The speaker is eager that one day he/she will grow wings and learn to fly but he/she has been let down repeatedly in life thus far so one should not expect things to change for the better in the hamster wheel society in which we live.

You know, you know where you are with

You know where you are with

ANNOTATION:

There is no control anymore. Thom is in a state of limbo. A [liminal phase](#). The one in which Zen practitioners purport to be the well spring of true change.

And one day

I am gonna grow wings
A chemical reaction
(You know where you are)
Hysterical and useless
(You know where you are)
Hysterical and
(You know where you are)

ANNOTATION:

A great image for the end of the 20th century. The act of becoming a butterfly, traditionally a metaphor indicating positive growth and coming into oneself, is scientifically examined and made grotesque by the information-age mind.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/0048e62184a6d04851e9114e6399120c.807x730x1.jpg>

But this is also contrasted with the idea that an airbag saved his life. How do you condemn something that actually saved your life and forced you to re-awaken and examine life through technology and science?

One day I am gonna grow wings

A chemical reaction
Hysterical and useless
Hysterical and

ANNOTATION:

An add on to the sentimentality of this song. At first the tone of this lyric begins optimistic, with the false hope he'll fly away, but then he realizes he's just reaching and his dream is just hysterical and hopeless.

<http://images.genius.com/e13bcd57431fd77fa95a4c46708d1315.733x528x1.jpg>

This stanza itself 'lets down' the listener, relating to the title and overall tone of the song. He knows he can dream because it is within his mind; however, he is always aware that the chances of his dreams coming true are negligible. His pragmatism only helps support the theme of the song.

Crushed like a bug in the ground

ANNOTATION:

Bugs can be crushed and remain alive, as they watch themselves come apart.

Yorke is saying that this is what the human race has become in this new technology infused society - a crushed bug just twitching there and calling it 'living'.

Transport, motorways and tramlines

Starting and then stopping
Taking off and landing
The emptiest of feelings
Disappointed people
Clinging on to bottles
And when it comes it's so, so disappointing

ANNOTATION:

Thom is talking about the let down of sentiment, of music and art to fulfill our emotional needs. It's just starting and stopping, business as usual. Wholly unremarkable.

The "clinging on to bottles" line originated from an idea that Yorke thought was hilarious:

I was pissed in a club, and I suddenly had the funniest thought I'd had for ages – what if all the people who were drinking were hanging from the bottles... if the bottles were hung from the ceiling with string, and the floor caved in, and the only thing that kept everyone up was the bottles? It's also about an enormous fear of being trapped.

Also, Thom has shown his extreme fear of transport, for example in a B Side called "[Killer Cars](#)" for example. The opening lines may refer to this, or possibly the dreary life of a band on tour.

Karma Police

Karma Police Lyrics[Verse 1]
Karma police, arrest this man
He talks in maths, he buzzes like a fridge
He's like a detuned radio

[Verse 2]
Karma police, arrest this girl
Her Hitler hairdo is making me feel ill
And we have crashed her party

[Chorus]
This is what you'll get
This is what you'll get
This is what you'll get
When you mess with us

[Verse 3]
Karma police, I've given all I can
It's not enough, I've given all I can
But we're still on the payroll

[Chorus]
This is what you'll get
This is what you'll get
This is what you'll get
When you mess with us

[Outro]

For a minute there

I lost myself, I lost myself

Phew, for a minute there

I lost myself, I lost myself

For a minute there

I lost myself, I lost myself

Phew, for a minute there

I lost myself, I lost myself101Embed

This is what you'll get

This is what you'll get

This is what you'll get

When you mess with us

ANNOTATION:

If the subject of the song is to be seen in the first verse as doling out karmic judgment on people who offend the narrator, the chorus could be seen as demonstrating the subject's fundamental misinterpretation of [Karma](#) by personalizing and subjectivizing it.

To the subject in the first verse, on the surface, Karma seems to exist to satisfy his desire to pass judgment on those who do things which annoy him. And if that's the case, then the chorus could be giving a clear confirmation as to what Karma means to him and what drives those judgments---and, perhaps, how he exonerates himself of the burden of consequence.

Karma police, arrest this girl

Her Hitler hairdo is making me feel ill

ANNOTATION:

The words may literally refer to a haircut called "Hitler youth" which is basically a high and tight, or even to a Hitler-esque haircut. However, the original lyrics to the song may help with extra meaning:

Karma police

Arrest this girl

She stares at us

As if she owns the world

And we have crashed her party"

This could mean that quite literally the woman in question is either extremely powerful, has dangerous thoughts, or is an opportunist that's only looking out for herself.

<https://images.genius.com/4ab19f94e916ea80677da974efa82d2e.707x1000x1.jpg>

There's also irony here, as the narrator is at once condemning someone for having Nazi characteristics while at the same time calling the Karma Police in the fashion of the Gestapo.

This line is also rumoured to be about Justine Frischmann of Suede and Elastica, which is somewhat confirmed by [this](#) 1994 interview where Thom Yorke refers to her and Brett Anderson as having "Hitler haircuts".

And we have crashed her party

ANNOTATION:

He hasn't literally crashed her party here - it's that he disagrees with this type of girl's opinions/worldviews/beliefs and by exposing her thoughts to be wrong he has/the karma police have therefore 'crashed her party'.

Karma police, I've given all I can

It's not enough, I've given all I can
But we're still on the payroll

ANNOTATION:

Where the first two verses are accusatory, this one is more exasperated.

"*I've given all I can/It's not enough*" is a phrase a lot of people can relate to; You can work your ass off for something (a job, a needy friend, a hard test) and no matter what, it's not enough and you're never satisfied; however, because you get something back from it ("*the payroll*") you stick with it because you don't know what else to do. Thus, the speaker is desperately asking for some credit for the good things he does.

Thom Yorke further [clarifies](#),

It's for someone who has to work for a large company. This is a song against bosses. Fuck the middle management!

"*We're still on the payroll*" also suggests that sometimes we play out the role of the Karma Police as well, executing what we think of as Karma. Of course, we twist what we find to be right/wrong to our execution of karma ("She's making me feel ill / And we have crashed her party.")

He buzzes like a fridge

He's like a detuned radio

ANNOTATION:

A refrigerator is generally left on at all times and the sound of its components rattling or buzzing can be annoying. A detuned radio refers to the white noise that can be heard when it isn't connected to a station.

Thom Yorke is referring to a person who talks constantly, but whose words are about as important as static. In a [2017 Rolling Stone interview](#) covering the 20th Anniversary of *OK Computer*, he described the sound as a metaphor for pointless words and, to a greater extent, modern rock:

It was partly the way of just expressing how some people just talk and they're not really saying anything. I just remember traveling around a lot, especially in America, and, like, modern rock was just like ... [imitates the sound of a loud fridge buzzing]

Funnily enough, the original demo contained a buzzing fridge that Yorke recorded:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lvaqa32pqM>

He talks in maths,

ANNOTATION:

"Maths" is a shortened UK term for "mathematics." This line might refer to a person who works with numbers, like a scientist or statistician; or, in simpler terms, it's a way of saying that the subject 'speaks in riddles' and irritates the authorities with what they consider to be nonsense.

While this line implies that intelligence is looked down upon by the conformist powers that be, the background behind the [next line](#) seems to imply the opposite: that [Thom Yorke](#) was annoyed by the dumbed-down nature of mainstream radio at the time of *OK Computer*'s release in 1997.

For a minute there

I lost myself, I lost myself
 Phew, for a minute there
 I lost myself, I lost myself
 For a minute there
 I lost myself, I lost myself
 Phew, for a minute there
 I lost myself, I lost myself

ANNOTATION:

At this point, the narrator answers his prior phrase "This is what you get;" because everyone is affected by Karma, he reminds himself that he, too, is not immune to Karma, and shouldn't be [putting negative emotions into the universe](#) since it might come back to get him.

"Phew, for a minute there, I lost myself" could also refer to accidentally letting go, relaxing, and being okay with himself before he remembers that he is still under scrutiny by other people also filling the role of the Karma Police.

Karma police, arrest this man

ANNOTATION:

[Karma](#) is a Sanskrit term for action and generally deals with the results of ones behavior. From a simplified Western perspective, the idea of karma is that if you perform an action, "you get what you deserve," whether good or bad.

<http://images.genius.com/549a37b27ea8d16b381075058814d40b.480x271x1.jpg>

There's no such thing as "karma police" in the Hindu religion; karma being a disembodied cosmic force. Yorke's narrator personifies the concept, asking the karmic police force to arrest someone for their trivial idiosyncrasies.

Fitter Happier

Fitter Happier Lyrics[Spoken Verse]
 Fitter, happier, more productive
 Comfortable (Not drinking too much)
 Regular exercise at the gym (Three days a week)
 Getting on better with your associate employee contemporaries
 At ease
 Eating well (No more microwave dinners and saturated fats)
 A patient, better driver
 A safer car (Baby smiling in back seat)
 Sleeping well (No bad dreams)
 No paranoia
 Careful to all animals (Never washing spiders down the plughole)
 Keep in contact with old friends (Enjoy a drink now and then)
 Will frequently check credit at (Moral) bank (hole in wall)
 Favours for favours
 Fond but not in love
 Charity standing orders
 On Sundays ring road supermarket
 (No killing moths or putting boiling water on the ants)
 Car wash (Also on Sundays)

No longer afraid of the dark
Or midday shadows
Nothing so ridiculously teenage and desperate
Nothing so childish
At a better pace
Slower and more calculated
No chance of escape
Now self-employed
Concerned (But powerless)
An empowered and informed member of society (Pragmatism not idealism)
Will not cry in public
Less chance of illness
Tires that grip in the wet (Shot of baby strapped in back seat)
A good memory
Still cries at a good film
Still kisses with saliva
No longer empty and frantic
Like a cat
Tied to a stick
That's driven into
Frozen winter shit (The ability to laugh at weakness)
Calm
Fitter, healthier and more productive
A pig
In a cage
On antibiotics

No chance of escape

ANNOTATION:

This song paints a picture of a dystopian world where conformity reigns and there is “no chance of escape.” This adds to the technological theme of the album, making it feel as if the social norms in this world are hardwired or programmed into people’s minds.

Careful to all animals (Never washing spiders down the plughole)

ANNOTATION:

The idea of [animal rights](#) is that all animals' existence should be put on a similar — equal — ground as our own. As such, common activities (**washing spiders down the plughole, killing moths, boiling water on the ants**) are implicitly labelled as teenage and elicit a negative connotation.

Animals are also used as an overall metaphorical device within the lyrics; they generally [imply a feeling of powerlessness, lack of control, loss of identity and individuality](#) — all dynamically intertwined in the song's ultimate subtext.

(The ability to laugh at weakness)

Calm

ANNOTATION:

Self-deprecation is when a person is modest or critical of themselves. It is a common device alongside a type of humor. The idea is that, instead of being egotistical, a person is able to be modest and receptive about themselves.

Concurrently, tranquility (calm) is something people generally want. It is also seen as a personality trait; people who are calm tend to be [more calculated], more responsive to their environment.

To have **the ability to laugh at weakness** and stay **calm** denotes acceptance. To self-deprecate oneself can be interpreted as *accepting* weakness; to be calm is a passive approach or state of mind — passivity is often synonymous with *acceptance*. Otherwise, we are looking at two incompatible lyrics.

[Which shows the problem.](#)

Fitter, healthier and more productive

ANNOTATION:

This line is similar to the first line of the song, except the word 'happier' is replaced with 'healthier'. This is a statement that the life individuals live is not truly a happier one, but is only 'healthier': it may help them to live longer, but it doesn't make life any more interesting.

[Spoken Verse]

ANNOTATION:

The track is famous for its neutral cold spoken word style. It's not voiced by any person, but rather by "Fred", the band's Apple Macintosh text-to-speech personnel.

Nigel Gordich noted that,

Fred's voice is so unemotional. I've always been interested in voice synthesis, because it's such a sort of bizarre juxtaposition of technology, trying to communicate verbally, which is what we do naturally. It's a very, very, very flat kind of delivery. And so that was clearly something that moved all of us.

Yorke was definitely moved, [describing it](#) as "the most emotional voice [he] heard in ages". He found relief in having the words spoken by something else, seeing it as "the ultimate dissociation with the lyrics and your responsibility for it. See it as something between a statement and an experiment."

The words play over a twinkling piano piece Yorke recorded while inebriated. Guitarist Ed O'Brien [remembers](#),

Thom basically had this checklist, like a nineties checklist if you like, and he had written it out. There is a bit of him playing piano, [which was] in the rehearsal room. He was very drunk one night, which you can tell by the sloppy playing on it, and he just played out this melody and stuff.

The text was born from a series of lists Yorke kept while he was burdened with writer's block.

Now self-employed

ANNOTATION:

This line is actually conceptually linked to the above two lines, "Slower and more calculated / No chance of escape".

Now the subject is self-employed, as all good humans are, they have no escape route. They're trapped into making their work pay so that they can live their perfect life. They're completely self-reliant and have no safety net to fall back on.

At a better pace

Slower and more calculated

ANNOTATION:

Continuing with the idea that human beings are slowly becoming puppets of society. Instead of approaching life naturally as it comes and stopping to observe the beauty of the world, the human puppet being described is so focused on maximum efficiency that even his/her steps are carefully calculated. Basically, he/she is a robot programmed by the powers that be.

Charity standing orders

ANNOTATION:

A standing order is an instruction to one's bank to pay a certain amount into another account on a regular basis. They are common in the UK, but less so in the US.

The narrator has set up such an order to give to charity. Giving money to charity can be easier than helping physically, but it separates the giver from the receiver. A charity standing order is just about the most impersonal, mechanical way to do good.

No longer afraid of the dark

Or midday shadows

Nothing so ridiculously teenage and desperate

Nothing so childish

ANNOTATION:

By writing off such fears as "teenage", "desperate", and "childish", the narrator hopes to create a society less focused on thoughts and feelings and more focused on productivity. This helps to express the critical attitude towards modern capitalism present throughout the song.

Fond but not in love

ANNOTATION:

The muted feelings that are “safe” and desired in a capitalist system. Fondness is ideal because it's an emotion that keeps people amiable (but in an at-arms-length sort of way). People who are “fond” of each other are more productive.

“Love” means passion which describes a much closer tie between people that can be threatening to the function of the group at the macro level. It's unpredictable, unstable, and produces favoritism.

Electioneering

Electioneering Lyrics[Verse 1]

I will stop, I will stop at nothing

Say the right things when electioneering

I trust I can rely on your vote

[Chorus]

When I go forwards
 You go backwards
 And somewhere we will meet
 When I go forwards
 You go backwards
 And somewhere we will meet
 [Laughing]

[Verse 2]

Riot shields, voodoo economics, your turn, your turn
 It's just business, cattle prods and the I.M.F
 I trust I can rely on your vote

[Chorus]

When I go forwards
 You go backwards
 And somewhere we will meet
 When I go forwards
 You go backwards
 And somewhere we will meet

I trust I can rely on your vote

ANNOTATION:

In a [1997 interview](#), Thom Yorke explained that this line was inspired by some awkward social encounters on an American tour (as well as his reading of Noam Chomsky):

"I had this phase I went through on an American tour where we just seemed to be shaking hands all the time, and I was getting a bit sick of it and upset by it. So I came up with this running joke with myself, where I used to shake people's hands and say, 'I trust I can rely on your vote.' They'd go hahaha and look at me like I was a nutcase. But the phrase sort of carried on. It was like a mantra.

"As well as that, I had been reading a lot of Chomsky, and I had that feeling when you read Chomsky that you want to get out and do something and realize, in fact, that you're impotent."

In addition, the line is satirical in the sense that it is mocking the candidates who are requesting to be elected.

Riot shields,

ANNOTATION:

Riot shields are transparent shields that police use during riots to protect them from thrown objects (like glass bottles or bricks). The mention of them in this song suggests that there has been a riot against politicians and their policies. Neoliberal politicians in the 1980s and 1990s broke their promises and were viewed as untrustworthy, which gave rise to a major wave of protests throughout the late 1990s and the 2000s

<https://images.genius.com/89e93f41ec7ad9b77edb15d9d7dc3dae.1000x637x1.jpg>

Voodoo economics, your turn, your turn

ANNOTATION:

This was a term used by George H.W. Bush to refer to Reagan's plan for the government, colloquially called [Reaganomics](#). Reaganomics was criticized by many, just like the elections happening in England at the time.

<http://images.genius.com/e171510ad034da27fd75025971e4982c.220x275x1.jpg>

I will stop, I will stop at nothing

Say the right things when electioneering

ANNOTATION:

This line and song is referring to Tony Blair's victory in the [1997 General election of the United Kingdom, when OK Computer was recorded](#). Blair had changed the "Labour Party", and updated it to the "New Labour". [This system had five pledges, which you can learn more about here](#).

<http://images.genius.com/a31a39bef29df0dcf8aed24cbcff8de3.240x237x1.jpg>

Radiohead were skeptics of this. They thought that Blair was going to not do the things that he promised, and was only doing what the public wanted him to be to get elected. "I will stop at nothing" is revealing that when politicians say they want to improve something, they end up making it worse (or not doing it at all!). This ties into the line about the I.M.F and cattle prods.

<http://images.genius.com/13cfadffc5bdc7f75633eec4f708ec52.1000x646x1.jpg>

Dorian Lynskey wrote, "On May 1, 1997, Labour supporters toasted their landslide victory to the sound of ['Things Can Only Get Better.'](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Things_Can_Only_Get_Better_(D:Ream_song)). A few weeks later, OK Computer appeared like Banquo's ghost to warn: 'No, things can only get worse.'"

When I go forwards

You go backwards
And somewhere we will meet
When I go forwards
You go backwards
And somewhere we will meet

ANNOTATION:

Radiohead's trademark cynicism. Thom Yorke believes that the politician sees himself as going forwards and the general public as going backwards in many aspects.

But the "somewhere we will meet" has to do with neo-conservative "trickle down" economics, another name for ["voodoo economics"](#) (also mentioned the song).

"Trickle down" economics are generally defined by large tax cuts for the rich and the overall "purging" of big government spending. The idea behind this, in the simplest terms, is that tax cuts for the upper brackets helps to stimulate the economy, which eventually "trickles down" to the lower classes through state-wide prosperity.

The "somewhere we will meet" line refers to the idea trumpeted by conservative politicians who promise voters that they will eventually meet each other in terms of prosperity, even though the whole idea of one person going forwards and the other going backwards and eventually meeting is far-fetched. This is the metaphor for Radiohead's opinion of "trickle-down" economics.

It's just business, cattle prods and the I.M.F

ANNOTATION:

The International Monetary Fund loans millions of dollars to small, underdeveloped (usually third-world) countries. This would be a nice, humanitarian gesture---if it wasn't for the ridiculous terms of the loans.

That country now has no control over their economy, and the IMF ensures that the currency is weakened, that almost all trade is of very little benefit to the small third world country. In essence, the poor third world country is now poorer, and indebted to the IMF, who have given them no opportunities to improve their situation. The regulations concerning the loans are commonly referred to as "The Golden Straitjacket."

<https://images.genius.com/89e24eae253beb7cbf97577515ad0e08.600x409x1.jpg>

The cattle prods, therefore, refer to the way in which poor countries are treated by large, multinational organizations.

Climbing up the Walls

Climbing up the Walls Lyrics[Verse 1]

I am the key to the lock in your house
That keeps your toys in the basement
And if you get too far inside
You'll only see my reflection
It's always best with the covers up
I am the pick in the ice
Do not cry out or hit the alarm
You know we're friends 'til we die

[Chorus]

And either way you turn
I'll be there
Open up your skull
I'll be there
Climbing up the walls

[Verse 2]

It's always best when the light is off
It's always better on the outside
Fifteen blows to the back of your head
Fifteen blows to your mind
So lock the kids up safe tonight
Shut the eyes in the cupboard
I've got the smell of a local man
Who's got the loneliest feeling

[Chorus]

That either way he turns
I will be there
Open up your skull
I'll be there
Climbing up the walls
Climbing up the walls
Climbing up the walls
*scream47*Embed

It's always better on the outside

ANNOTATION:

When Yorke worked at a mental facility, the standard policy in the care industry was to release/de-institutionalize as many people as possible to save funds, leading to some releases of people who should have stayed in. This may be an oblique reference to that.

Shut the eyes in the cupboard

ANNOTATION:

The line is a clever nod to the children's expression 'monsters in the closet'. As the name implies, it's the childish fear of a monster lurking in the closet, out to get them at night. Often tossed aside by parents as imaginative and fictitious followed by a reassured tuck-in to bed. Thom perverts the silliness of the cliché to enhance the potency of the dark themes this song addresses.

Perverting innocence as a theme has been well used in pop-culture. Children and their innocence are treated like like perfect god-like creatures- they embody our envy to be oblivious to the fears that plague our minds, yet to be tainted by the reality of the world. This desperation for "Ignorance is bliss" is a common theme surrounding 'ok computer'. Exhausted from being paranoid and instead embody denial towards those emotions. By juxtaposing these two opposing tones, Thom is able to embody a nuanced terror that colours the already dark themes into an even more frightful shade.

I am the pick in the ice

ANNOTATION:

Just like a pickaxe breaking the ice, paranoia can shatter your mind.

I've got the smell of a local man

ANNOTATION:

"A local man" is another way of saying someone in the neighbourhood, someone stalking or haunting you, fitting with the picture of paranoia or dark thoughts in this song and elsewhere on the album.

And either way you turn

I'll be there
Open up your skull
I'll be there

ANNOTATION:

Thom is talking about paranoia can be everywhere for some people, either way you look, or even just inside your own head

<https://images.genius.com/f58389b0cce0349ec3f839f823513b71.1000x639x1.jpg>

Climbing up the walls

ANNOTATION:

Climbing up walls is something considered an action done out of pure desperation. The fact that the speaker wants to escape this thing he is afraid of, he is resorting to pure desperation to get away from it.

It could also be interpreted as this monster climbing up the walls to get you, climbing up the walls into your bedroom at night.

That either way he turns

I will be there

ANNOTATION:

The "local man" (referred to as "he" in the first line) could be anyone. These lines show depression and the mental demons we face (personified by the narrator) effect everyone, and either way they turn, they'll still be there.

Fifteen blows to the back of your head

Fifteen blows to your mind

ANNOTATION:

this is a suggestion of being on death row. the number 15 has a special significance for the author, like in the song "[15 steps](#)" representing the number of steps one takes on the gallows before being hung.

It could also represent having to climb 15 floors to your apartment and in moments of weakness contemplating suicide from the heights. A similar idea is suggested in "[Just](#)"

Particular line: *"Don't get no sympathy, hanging out the fifteenth floor"*

<http://images.rapgenius.com/19865e3369a60641c2152a70654e2550.500x333x1.jpg>

Bonus fact: In the binary theory of this album, this song is the 15th song in the progression.

And if you get too far inside

You'll only see my reflection

ANNOTATION:

Further building upon the second line, as you go further into the basement, further into the dark, shadowy, scary basement where all your secrets hide.

If you go toooooo far into this basement, you'll only see his reflection. These two lines really hit home the obsession people have of anxiety.

The person created by your paranoia has stated he is the key to your house, he is the reason nobody knows your secrets but he is also the shadows that you see late at night, he is your deepest, most terrifying secret. And he never leaves you.

<http://images.genius.com/f5446fd23b3337d4990635485ffff08a.259x194x1.jpg>

That keeps your toys in the basement

ANNOTATION:

This continues what Thom was saying in the first line. He is her safety, her security. He is also the one that keeps her secrets or "toys" in the basement. It is a lovely way of describing a secret, Imagine all those old toys you no longer play with, that have been in the basement for years, you've completely forgotten about them and they have become broken and decayed over time.

<http://images.genius.com/7e595a03fb7994316b2ee36d00025e44.300x441x1.jpg>

But the toys still hold emotions and memories and maybe as Thom so eloquently put it, the toys hold secrets, that you have thrown away and tried to forget about. Thom is saying that he is the reason no one knows your secrets. That nobody knows about your "toys"

It's all very spooky and that's what makes this song so powerful. And next two lines built upon the spookiness(If that is even a word.)

No Surprises

No Surprises Lyrics[Verse 1]

A heart that's full up like a landfill
A job that slowly kills you
Bruises that won't heal
You look so tired, unhappy
Bring down the government
They don't, they don't speak for us
I'll take a quiet life
A handshake of carbon monoxide

[Chorus]

And no alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises
Silent, silent

[Verse 2]

This is my final fit
My final bellyache with

[Chorus]

No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises
No alarms and no surprises, please

[Verse 3]

Such a pretty house
And such a pretty garden

[Chorus]

No alarms and no surprises
(Get me out of here)
No alarms and no surprises
(Get me out of here)
No alarms and no surprises, please
(Get me out of here)Related Songs100Embed

My final bellyache with

ANNOTATION:

"Bellyache" has two different meanings:

Firstly, nausea, which is a symptom of carbon monoxide poisoning, which he [alluded to earlier](#). There's the pain and annoyance of having nausea or a stomach ache. He's happy that he won't suffer this again in his lifetime.

Secondly, the phrase bellyaching refers to one complaining loudly. This is his final complaint about the world before he leaves it forever. The narrator has chosen to abandon rebellion or emotion completely, surrendering himself to complacency.

You look so tired, unhappy

ANNOTATION:

The line accounts the persona's unhappiness to the tiring life-style they fall victim to (e.g. "job that slowly kills"); taking an emotional ("unhappy") and physical ("tired") toll. The casualty in which this is expressed (assuming by an acquaintance) exemplifies the unfortunate commonality of such issues (a human experience).

Furthermore, if it is indeed an acquaintance's superficial comment on the persona's state, averting meaningful discussions regarding the individual's difficult situation (i.e. commenting but not inquiring and reductively accounting complex personal pain solely to government inadequacies) could be a nod to society's unhealthy handling of mental health that further alienates individuals (ultimately perpetuating his struggles).

I'll take a quiet life

ANNOTATION:

This line connects to the previous, whereby the population's disdain of the government's inability to "speak for us" is contrasted by the persona's desire for a "quiet life". This effectively represents his alternate aspirations; desiring a life of solidarity after abandoning all hope of being heard ("speak") by others. Instead, he craves a life devoid of superficial distractions and the obtainment of further escape mechanisms (e.g. "handshake of carbon monoxide"); a more passive, possibly dissociative, lifestyle.

Also, the line could be a double-entendre, whereby the narrator also implies his intention to take his own life and descend into a state of eternal silence (i.e. death).

This is my final fit

ANNOTATION:

The consistent utilisation of infantile imagery (e.g. "fit", "bellyache", "pretty") coupled with the over-arching lullaby sounds, represents the persona's regression to a deeply helpless state. Here, the emotional outcry is paralleled with a "fit" which is typically reserved to describe a child's emotional outburst. The description effectively reduces the perceived integrity/value of his voice by comparing it to the excessive and seemingly unreasonable tantrums of a child; representing the persona's negative value of self. Furthermore, a child's fit may also be a desperate plea to satiate their fundamental needs. In this case, his yearning to be understood is shut-down under the assumption that no one will understand him (whereby "final fit" highlights the futility of previous attempts to be heard). In light of this, he seems to announce this line to himself, which is a further sorrowful nod to his belief that nobody is listening.

Ultimately, the persona finds solace in declaring his "final fit"; comforted by the knowledge that this will be the last time he has to feel misunderstood/unheard/alone because all will be relieved in death.

(Get me out of here)

ANNOTATION:

This lyric makes more sense in the context of the music video, where Thom is trapped in a glass container filling with water. Here, Thom is literally begging to be let out of the glass container. Perhaps the job that's slowly killing him has led to him choosing suicide, but he regrets his choice and wants to be "let out". This is a very literal interpretation of the lyric however.

A more figurative interpretation is that Thom is asking for death, and wants to be "let out" of existence. This fits with the themes in the song that suggest to suicide or other means of death. Alternatively, Thom may be simply asking to be free of the job that is slowly killing him or his current situation in his life.

Bring down the government

They don't, they don't speak for us

ANNOTATION:

It seems self explanatory: a person realizing the government is a crock of shit and doesn't normally act on what people want/need.

But that reading doesn't fit in with the rest of the song, nor with Yorke's aggressively monotone singing. It's more interesting to read this line as a sarcastic retort to all the people who are trying to help a depressed person fix his own life.

Yorke is neither embracing or refusing an anti-government view. Rather, the character in this song, who appears to be suicidal, is tired of other people telling him what's wrong. He can't fix his job, or his bruises, let alone the entire government. He's trapped in the world inside his own head.

In an interview with [Rolling Stone](#) as part of an expansive oral history of the making of *Ok Computer*, Yorke discussed the meaning of this line specifically:

[The line "Bring down the government/They don't, they don't speak for us"] has become this weird thing, it gets this weird reaction [when we play it now]. But again that was written on a shitty bus journey. A two-hour bus journey with a bunch of old-age pensioners in Britain. I don't know why my car wasn't working. It actually wasn't a political thing at all. It was like, "Why have people like this been dropped? Why are we just left to rot? If this is a democracy then they should be helping us. Why aren't they helping us?" It was just that."

The song may be about suicide, and the first verse alludes to the singer being depressed and worn out. Stating "bring down the government, they don't speak for us" isn't so much rebellious as it is passive-aggressive. A suicidal person might feel abandoned by the world around him, but can't do much about it other than complain.

A heart that's full up like a landfill

A job that slowly kills you
Bruises that won't heal

ANNOTATION:

He doesn't think his life is worth it. This is all he sees in his life (pain, a job he hates, emotional scars).

According to the [Radiohead fan site GreenPlastic](#), this song was actually recorded at a faster speed and then slowed down when Thom Yorke put the vocal track on it.

A job that slowly kills you is like how a landfill slowly kills the earth, and leaves permanent marks, like bruises.

Such a pretty house

And such a pretty garden

ANNOTATION:

A perfect allusion to the stereotypical White Picket Fence type of living. That dream may be tempting, but it really isn't what you thought it would be. It isn't the gateway into a perfect life. <http://images.rapgenius.com/7b38c65f5a8d80bad9bc29d5c45390c7.450x345x1.jpg>

At one point this line was "Such a pretty house and such a pretty baby." http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=0q37irQm58M#t=167s This sounds much more troubled.

A handshake of carbon monoxide

ANNOTATION:

Carbon Monoxide is the same weight and density of oxygen. Colorless, tasteless and odorless, the person inhaling the poisonous fumes falls asleep. After consciousness is lost, it will cause death.

Most buildings have fire alarms in order to warn you of high levels of carbon monoxide, even if you can't see a fire; as opposed to being surprised by the alarm and the event, he'd simply rather accept it and die.

Here he states he will take the quiet life, and compares this complacent resolution to a handshake of carbon monoxide, a silent killer—as surrendering to time is also a silent killer. Yet, by the end of the song, he makes a promise to *not* go gentle into that good night. That the fight is worth all the troubles and a normal simple life is not manufacturing real change in our society. The simplicity is not enough.

Lucky

Lucky Lyrics[Verse 1]

I'm on a roll

I'm on a roll this time

I feel my luck could change

Kill me, Sarah

Kill me again with love

It's gonna be a glorious day

[Chorus]

Pull me out of the aircrash

Pull me out of the lake

'Cause I'm your superhero

We are standing on the edge

[Verse 2]

The head of state

Has called for me by name

But I don't have time for him

It's gonna be a glorious day

I feel my luck could change

[Chorus]

Pull me out of the aircrash

Pull me out of the lake

'Cause I'm your superhero

We are standing on the edge

[Outro]

We are standing on the edge

[Chorus]

ANNOTATION:

The chorus paints a picture of an airplane crash that reconstructs Thom's life. It gives him the confidence to be the king of his destiny and to take control of his new life. This is a similar theme to that of "Airbag," the opener on the album.

We are standing on the edge

ANNOTATION:

This song's lyrics are full of contradictions--begging to be killed as glorious; needing to be pulled out of wreckage despite being a superhero; going from "kill me" to denying a head of state's request. "Lucky" ending with this line is an ultimate reconciliation of instability.

[Verse 2]

ANNOTATION:

The stark contrast created by the juxtaposition of Verse 1's repeated "Kill me" lyrics to these, combined with an upbeat shift in instrumentals, gives Verse 2 an almost manic quality. It's a polar opposite swing—from suicidal to extravagantly confident. It begs the question: Is this a change of luck or is it an out-of-touch, perhaps mentally ill misperception?

I'm on a roll

I'm on a roll this time

ANNOTATION:

In gambling, a series of victories or hot streak is frequently referred to as a roll. In this case, the lyrics do not reflect gambling per se; rather, they are talking about a series of good things happening successively in one's life, attributing it to luck. These streaks happen.

It's gonna be a glorious day

I feel my luck could change

ANNOTATION:

The contrast between these lines and the chorus, which follows immediately afterwards, is another classic example of Thom Yorke's dark lyricism. As soon as the narrator begins to develop a sense of self-esteem and pick himself up from the ashes, he finds himself in a plane crash.

Of course, the main theme of this song is *luck* – probability doesn't care about whether or not someone is having a good or bad day. While we can *feel* whatever we want about how the day is going to be, life, in all its uncertainty, can easily change our fortunes for the better or worse.

Even though they're incredibly rare, [plane crashes do happen](#). The narrator's luck did change – for the worse.

The head of state

Has called for me by name
But I don't have time for him

ANNOTATION:

Continuing the "superhero" theme of the chorus, the narrator is clearly emboldened by his personal optimism. What better way is there to solidify your own importance than by snubbing the most important person in your country: the head of state?

This can be read as a cynical, hyperbolic example of optimism. The narrator clearly feels like he is above everything – however, as the chorus following this verse reveals, even the most powerful need a helping hand every now and then. Even the president or prime minister is helpless in a crashing plane.

Interestingly, Thom Yorke himself was [invited to 10 Downing Street](#) following Tony Blair's historic election win in May 1997. He refused to go.

Pull me out of the aircrash

Pull me out of the lake
'Cause I'm your superhero
We are standing on the edge

ANNOTATION:

This is an extended metaphor about love.

Though the narrator believes he is a superhero to "Sarah", even he needs somebody special to rescue him when it seems all hope is lost.

They are fateful companions helping each other while facing disaster ("aircrash", "lake") or doom ("on the edge"). Neither one could do without the other in this world. His outlook stays optimistic even in the worst of times.

[Verse 1]

ANNOTATION:

The song opens with a fade-in of Ed O'Brien playing his guitar in an unconventional manner. By not fretting or muting any strings and then strumming [above the nut](#) of the guitar, he produces the high-pitched ringing sound you can hear droning throughout the verses. This is enhanced by O'Brien's trademark heavy echo effects.

A different use of the same technique can be heard two minutes into ["No One Knows"](#) by Queens of the Stone Age:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=s88r_q7oufE#t=120s

Kill me, Sarah

Kill me again with love

ANNOTATION:

In the demo version of this song the words are:

Fill me again
Fill me sarah
With love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZP51ajPJ7II>

Sarah is the image of love or of the person he loves, so he wants to say that "Sarah" fills him with love again and again, pushing him forward and saving from all his problems. But later, on the studio version, he edited these lines and replaced "fill" with "kill". This could mean that this love from "Sarah" is a burden, and he doesn't find saviour as before, as if he lost faith in this love and assistance, underlining cyclic excesses from "Sarah".

There is a lot of debate as to who "Sarah" is and what relation she has to Thom Yorke. He stated, however, that he just personally likes the name Sarah, it is his "favourite name," and thought it would sound good in the song.

The Tourist

The Tourist Lyrics[Verse 1]

It barks at no one else but me

Like it's seen a ghost

I guess it's seen the sparks a-flowin

No one else would know

[Chorus]

Hey man, slow down, slow down

Idiot, slow down, slow down

[Verse 2]

Sometimes I get overcharged

That's when you see sparks

They ask me where the hell I'm going

At a thousand feet per second

[Chorus]

Hey man, slow down, slow down

Idiot, slow down, slow down

[Guitar solo]

[Chorus]

Hey man, slow down, slow down

Idiot, slow down, slow down

At a thousand feet per second**ANNOTATION:**

The speed of sound is actually 1,116ft per second. If the narrator was traveling at 1,000 feet per second he would be able to "see" sound so to speak by virtue of his relative velocity. This ties into the previous line: "Sometimes I get overcharged that's when you see sparks". This directly refers to [Thom Yorke's grapheme synesthesia](#), a condition where he sees sound as color.

They ask me where the hell I'm going**ANNOTATION:**

People see this guy moving quickly and wonder what he's achieving by doing this. The truth is that this tourist is moving too fast to truly enjoy what he is experiencing and thus he needs to 'slow down' and take everything in. The point of this song can be seen as saying that we are all tourists on earth to some degree and, rather than rush through life at 1000 feet per second, we should take time to appreciate everything. The Tourist is an optimistic closer to the album in that it offers a solution for all the issues and themes presented throughout Ok Computer.

I guess it's seen the sparks a-flowin

No one else would know

ANNOTATION:

Dogs sometimes have an uncanny understanding of hidden emotional and physical states. In particular, the tourist is stressed and harried because he is rushing to efficiently fulfill his obligations. He feels like a robot going haywire and breaking down. Furthermore, no one knows he is not working properly because they are also malfunctioning robots as they rush through their lives.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/880f478c3e1406be84ef792bc9d0d176.1000x720x1.jpg>

It barks at no one else but me

Like it's seen a ghost

ANNOTATION:

This is the tourist's dog's reaction when the tourist returns home. Because he travels so much, his own dog doesn't recognize him. Also, the excessive traveling has rendered him lethargic or almost dead like a ghost.

The ghost like appearance might also be caused by an excessive desire to conform to social expectations.

Sometimes I get overcharged

That's when you see sparks

ANNOTATION:

The narrator of this song sometimes becomes overwhelmed by anxiety and suffers an explosive fit, compared to when an electronic device gets overcharged.

It is in these states of overstimulation that synesthesia completely takes over and at times it can sustain mania and feel like pure ecstasy. [Thom has experienced strong bouts of synesthesia before.](#)

Hey man, slow down, slow down

Idiot, slow down, slow down

ANNOTATION:

There have been several suggestions for who the tourist begs to stop scrambling through life. It could be a single person or the whole world; perhaps it's the impatient natives of the city the tourist is visiting. It could even be reflexive advice given in the third person. The song thematically crescendos as this plea becomes more and more desperate.

The chime, the last sound we hear, is the product of drummer [Phil Selway hitting a triangle](#). We have several interpretations of the chime.

- The chime is ironic, recalling the buzz of some modern appliance like a microwave or a toaster. It brings a chilling closure to the album.
 - The chime represents society finally realizing the error of its ways. People are heeding the tourist's advice and begin to slow down. As Thom said himself, the band always tries to throw in a dash of optimism in even their bleakest songs.
 - The chime is representative of a happier ending, similar to the ending of Cameron Crowe's [Say Anything...](#), in which the chime represents the "no smoking" sign turning on. At the end of *Say Anything...*, Lloyd reminds Diane, who is afraid of flying, that most accidents occur in the first five minutes, so the "no smoking" chime means everything will likely be fine.
 - The chime represents the crashing of the car that is the subject of [Airbag](#) (the first song on the album). The airbag saves his life, and he continues his life through the album until he gets to "The Tourist" again.
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