

# Minor Movements

Reflections on Quotations



**Stories of quiet resilience. Each one begins with a quote. Each one ends with a truth you didn't expect.**

**Gilberto Manuel Guadiana**

# PREFACE

I didn't set out to write a book. Each of these stories started with a quote from one of many that I had collected over the years. These were mainly quotes that I heard, read, or remembered. I stayed with the feeling of the quote. I tried to be honest. Sometimes the story went in different directions than how I thought it would.

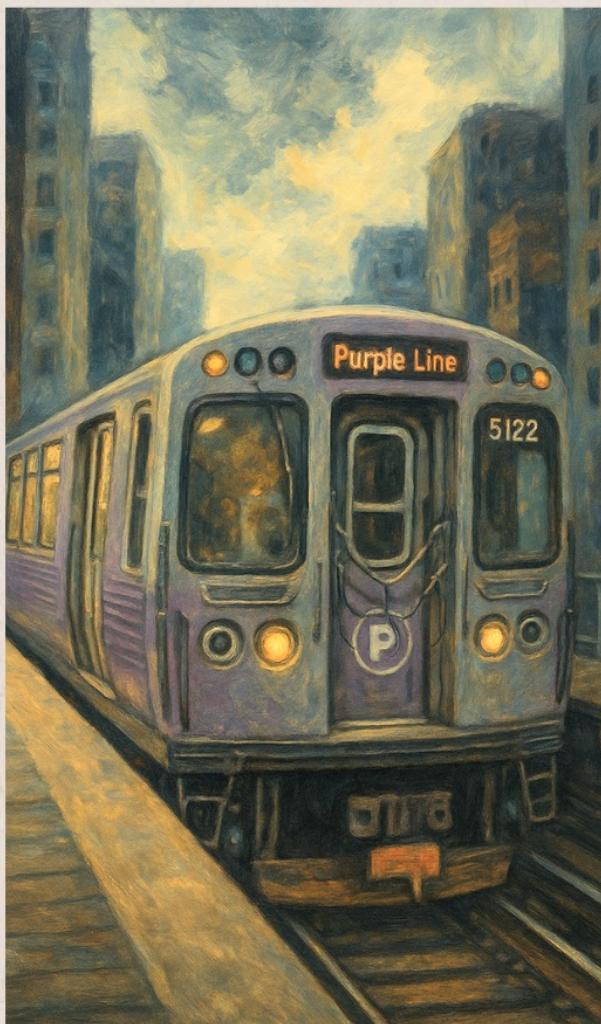
What came out of this is not something grand and expertly woven. It's a series of loosely connected small, personal moments. A glimpse here. A bit of warmth there. A bit of lasting sting. Each is paired with an AI generated piece of artwork to that aims to enhance the story. As a collective, they may say something about the human experience and playing the hand we are dealt.

I wrote these stories in the order that they appear. What you're reading is the shape it took when I let the stories happen.

If any of them feel true to you, I am glad that I wrote them down.

Gilberto Manuel Guadiana

**"Order and disorder. They each have their beauty."**



Coming out of the airport, it can be tough to take the purple line back home at night. The purple line isn't directly connected to the airport. Instead, you have to go from orange to red to purple. Then you have to walk home to your dorm after that.

The red line is where you see some unusual characters. The orange line is filled with your usual suspects. But the red line could have drunk people coming back from the Cubs game, your stereotypical homeless man, or a sleepless, overemployed waitress. Sometimes the journey is uneventful. Sometimes the train is delayed.

You never really know how long the trains will take, so you have to pack a jacket. Chicago can get a little windy. You also have to be careful. If you're not careful, you might miss something.

You might miss a trickle of liquid trailing near your 47.3-pound bag. If you did, you'd easily find a grinning man you had been ignoring for some time now. He seems to be generally harmless, but he likes to have his fun too. It can be cleaned, though. When you step away, he doesn't follow.

The trip is taxing, even for your suitcase wheels. They break often when you make that kind of a trip. But it's worth saving the money. It's also arm training. The biceps complain, but the forearms are strong. They've been strong for a while now.

It's been a couple of steady months of progress at the gym. The kind of progress you don't notice until you're walking the last mile after leaving the purple line stop. It hurts, but you're used to it by that point.

**It's just another rep.**

## 2

"Let's commit the perfect crime. I'll steal your heart,  
and you'll steal mine."



Coming back from home, the front door was open again. Your wife forgot to lock it. You hope she's okay.

There have been crimes in the area lately. Your neighbor got robbed. Someone's tree got spray painted with things you never want to see. It was the kind of things that make you ask yourself if you should be moving out soon.

But you can't stop the surge of irritation. It's been an issue for months now. You wouldn't say it's related to the dead bedroom situation, but it did start around that time. You miss your wife. A lot of it has to do with the two year old running around. He insults you. He steals your wife from you.

Still, the door is open, so you proceed with caution. You were never really brave. When your teacher put you in a chokehold, you didn't report it. You liked the guy, but it stuck with you.

You smell something burning. It's coming from the kitchen. It's the kitchen you just spent \$20,000 to remodel. It wasn't cheap, and you didn't have the money on it. But the HELOC did.

You find your wife scrambling to save the once yellow rice. No amount of spices is going to cover that up, but you're probably going to eat it anyway tonight. The toddler is clinging to her leg.

You're glad she's okay. You're glad he's okay.

**It's only the rice that she's still making for you.**

## 3

"And then in that moment when I love them... I destroy them."

Boredom. It's something you're used to. Your mom doesn't pick you up from school until 6:45. Most days it's not so bad. The library is open after school. You do your homework so finishing homework has never been a big deal. You're at school longer than you are at home.

The library isn't always welcoming. Carlos has had it out for you for a while. Your parents have been strapped for cash. They make just enough for you to not qualify for free lunch at school, so you're the only one with a lunch bag. It's not bad food, but it doesn't always look great. You try to hide it. You feel shame.

Carlos likes to take your lunch bag. He says it's a great massager for his crotch.

He's sneaky enough to not get noticed by the chaperones. But the lunchbox smells afterward. It takes time to get the lunchbox back. Sometimes he gets his fix early. Sometimes he doesn't.

Today's lunch had one of your mom's hairs in it. You didn't eat the rest of your sandwich. Others would notice if you took it out. It's a long hair. And now the lunchbox is serving a different purpose.

You try to get it back because your mom came early for once. It's 4:45, so it was a surprise. Normally, you just hide around the side of the school.

You learned to stay away from the front. The chaperones always make you call your mom every ten minutes. You hate her voicemail.

But today, you need to leave. You've learned to talk shit. It's one of the few things that works to get your lunchbox back. You call Carlos fat. You throw in something about his mom. Something sharp. Something cruel.

It works.

But you've been there too. Your doctor said you were obese just last year, before the weight dropped off.

You got the bag back. **You said what you had to, but maybe you shouldn't have.**

**"This is how I did it, Anton. I never saved anything for the swim back."**

It's been eight months. Eight months since January. Eight months since you set the intention. Last year, you gained 50 pounds. It wasn't on purpose. You're not to blame. But the food saved you.

You've had depression for a while, but the fog is starting to fade. Pound by pound you're able to laugh more and more again. It's been over 13 years. You used to be handsome. You used to be able to look at yourself in the mirror. You used to have hair.

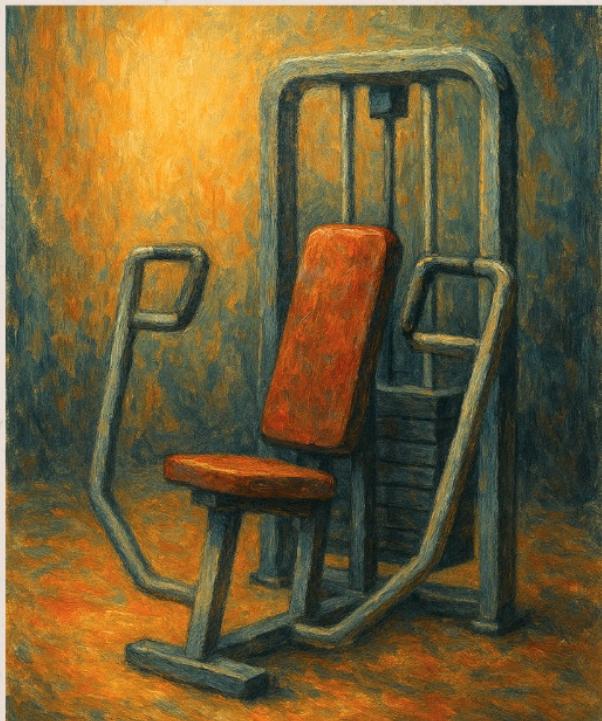
Now you're making progress. They say it's a weight loss journey. You thought it was going to be like every other January filled with broken promises. Last year was rough. The goal was to find a job and move out of your mom's house. It's hard enough being cheated on by your high school sweetheart. Add to that the sting when you lie to yourself and don't follow through.

She was a good girl. You still think about her every once in a while. She used to believe in you. You saw that slowly go away and then all at once. Maybe the problems started when you couldn't get out of bed on the weekends. Maybe it was before then. Anyway, she found someone else. But now you found the iron temple.

At the gym, no one really looks at you. You stick to the machines, serve your 30 minutes, and are on your way. The gym takes the suicidal edge off the end of the day. Before, you would just come back to your studio apartment and lay in bed.

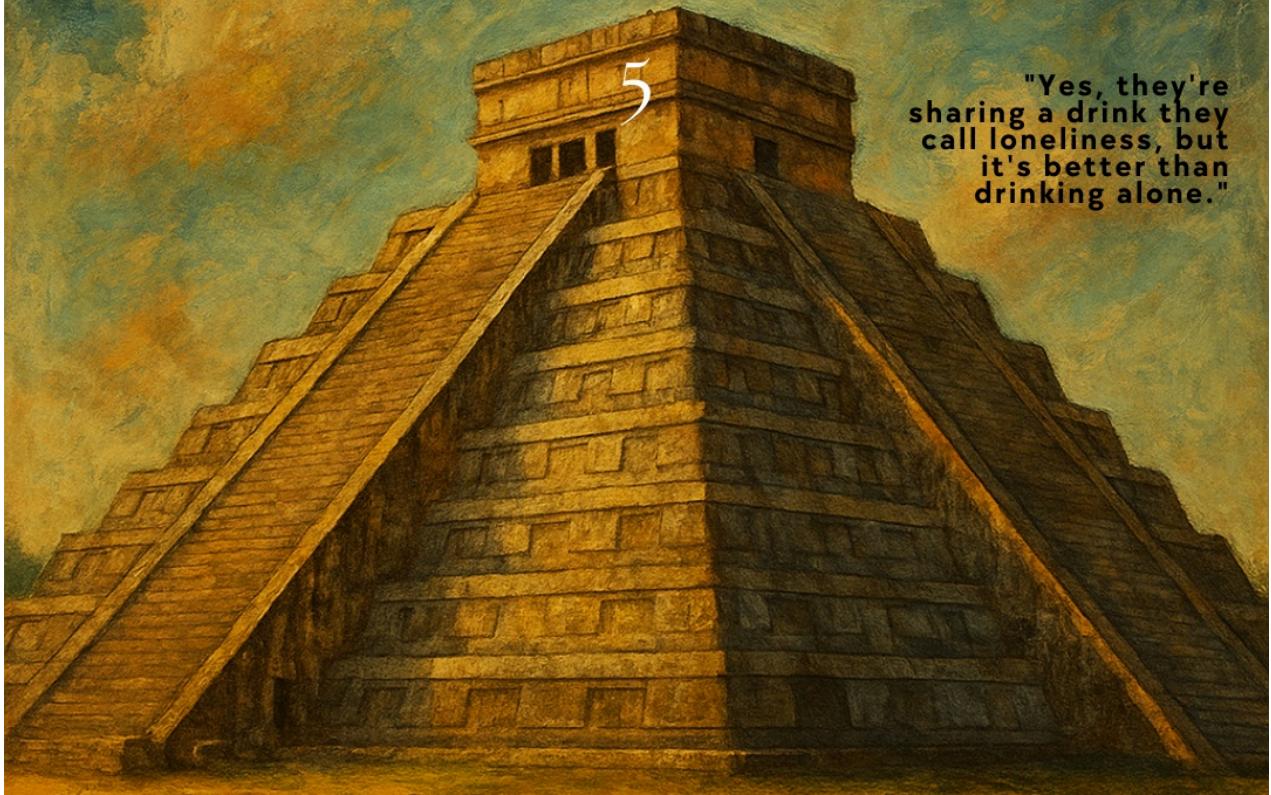
Today was a lot of fun. You got to stock tuna cans on the shelves. You found the job through your mom. She knows a guy that knows a guy that got you the interview. It's been good for you. You were jobless for two years.

The good thing is that you have your mom. You have the gym. **You are still here.**



"Yes, they're sharing a drink they call loneliness, but it's better than drinking alone."

5



You call yourself a digital nomad. At least, that's what sounds cool. In reality, you've been backpacking throughout Latin America for the last three years. Sometimes you find work online and often you don't. You still smell the hints of gasoline from fixing an old man's tractor this morning.

When you do find online work, you're a technical writer. You've always been more interested in things than people, yet you've always yearned to see the world. It started with the picture encyclopedias your parents kept at home. Your grandpa would show you the good photos. It was the Mayan temples that kicked it off.

Six years ago, your grandparents paid for you to go see Chichen Itzá in Mexico. You don't forget the bird sounds that came from clapping. It was a gift for having graduated from college with your accounting degree. You used to be a bean counter. You burned out after 2 or 3 years. It's hard to remember. You don't think back on the dark days often.

When you don't find work online, you're a ranch hand, carpenter, electrician, or a good old handyman. You take what you can get. You only need enough to continue living this lifestyle. Your Spanish is broken but it has never been too big of an issue. A smile goes a long way.

The people are nice too. They often let you camp in their yards and share a meal with you. They let you use their shower. Sometimes you really just need a shower. You will never forget the young kid that brought you a bar of soap for you to use in the river. You don't necessarily have any friends anymore. But that's okay. **You'll take one day of connection over a lifetime of pretending.**

A painting of a large red barn with a white trim around the windows and doors. In the foreground, a black and white cow looks directly at the viewer. Another cow is visible in the background behind a wooden fence. The sky is a warm, golden color.

"And I just lost my mind,  
but I still got you."

6

You've been studying for the SAT exam for a while now. You realized this summer that this is your last shot to get out of rural life. You have been a ranch hand all of your life. It's now your senior year, and you're applying to colleges.

The last couple of attempts didn't go so well. You can do the English section, but math has never been your strong suit. You're glad that your boyfriend has been tutoring you. It's brought you from a 400 to a projected 700 on a good day. He's great. He's the kind of guy that you know will leave his mark on the world. He says that he wants to work for NASA one day.

You are about to take the math section of your last SAT exam. Your heart rate is at 100 BPM. They took your Garmin watch away, but you know your heart. After all, you run cross country. You're confident though. You know that you can do it. Your boyfriend would be proud.

Your exam comes back. It wasn't the score you wanted. You thought it was an easy exam. Life showed you that it wasn't. You and your boyfriend applied to all of the same schools. The relationship matters more to you than anything but God.

Your boyfriend has been talking to you about the future. He paints a picture where both of you will be old, crusty, and in love. Your heart rate is back at 100 BPM. You don't think you will get into the school he actually wants to go to with the score you got.

It hurts. You cry. You mourn. You take a couple of days to get over it. Your boyfriend is there. He said you won't remember this when you have grandchildren together. **You don't know if you'll remember this moment, but for now, that's enough.**

**"If you hate your life, try something different. It's like chess."**

Your superpower is being okay with rejection. You think of yourself as a failure. Not in a bad way. Not in a way that detracts from your self esteem. Instead, it grounds you. You see failure as a catalyst for change. You've been changing all your life. You've worked 27 different jobs. You liked all of them. You're 55 now.

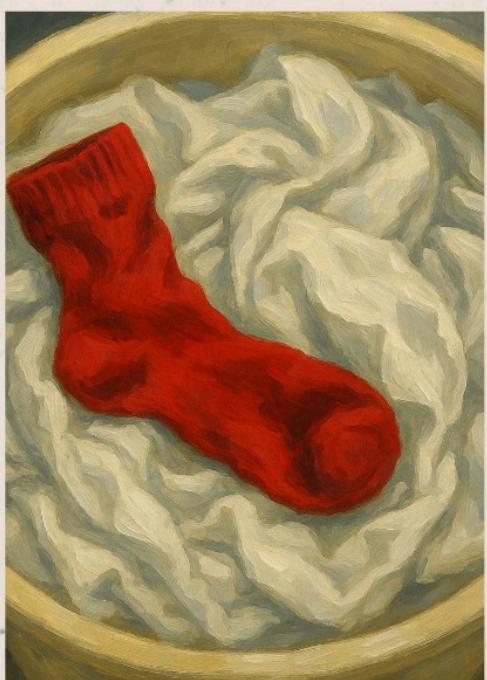
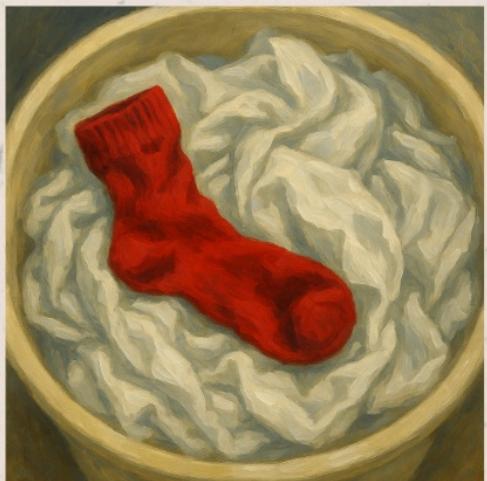
Today, it's laundry day. You made a mistake. Your red sock got into the white laundry, and now everything is pink. Your day is ruined. You mope around your house. It's not a great start to your Sunday.

The worst part is that your friend from high school has a birthday party today. All of your other clothes are dirty. You don't have time to wash another load. It's time to go to church. You never miss mass, especially not for a pink shirt.

You put on your new soft pink polo. It's not the look you wanted, but that's what you get for trying out this minimalism thing you saw in a documentary. Most of your old wardrobe is gone after that one.

You head to Church. You normally go to confession before Church, but today wasn't your day. You made it just in time for mass. As you entered, the greeter holding the door said, "Hey! Looking good." Jeff has known you for a long time. Long enough to know that it was a laundry mistake.

You think that maybe it's not so bad. **You miss the white color, but this one isn't so bad after all.**



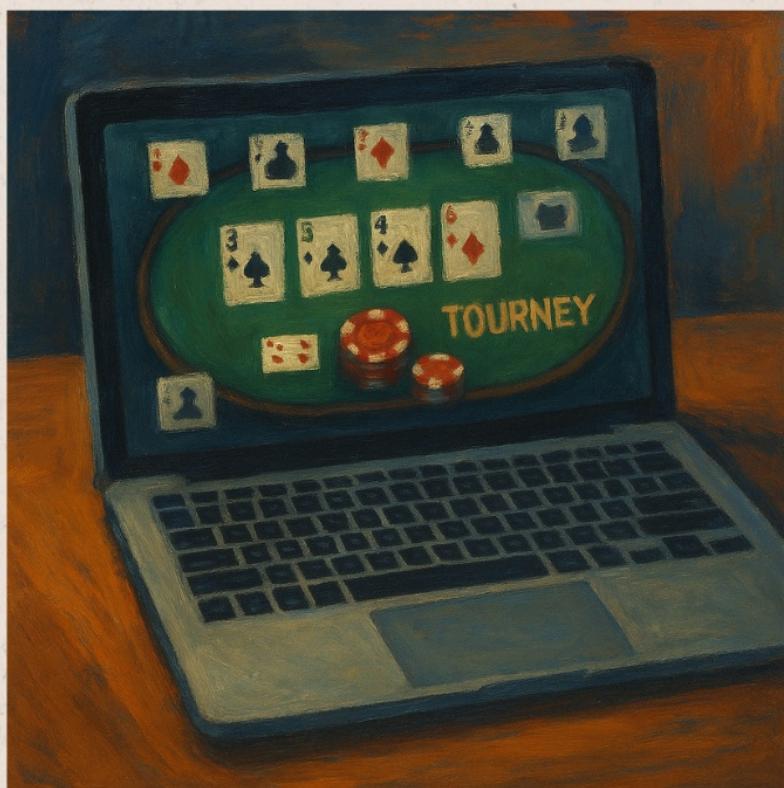
# 8

**"Statistics mean nothing to the individual."**

You wouldn't say that you're a gambler. You just happen to play a lot of poker. It just happens to be the only thing you do actually. Your weekday routine is coming home from work, taking one or two shots of whiskey, and sitting on the sofa while playing micro-stakes poker all evening long. It's a simple life.

Others say you have a problem with alcohol and gambling.

You say that it's been working great so far. It's actually a great savings habit. You save 70% of your income. You're on track to retire early at 45 in 10 years.



Your family doesn't see it that way. Sure, occasionally you'll miss a wedding, or a birthday, or a Christmas. Sometimes you just get the itch. It just keeps growing and growing. The next thing you know you're hours deep in a tournament. Is that a bad thing? "Investment banking is stressful, and I need some stress relief," you say.

They don't listen though. They keep yapping about untapped potential and how you could use your God given gifts to make a huge impact on the world. You think it's a lot of nonsense.

You finish the night with your stack going from \$20 to \$3. **It wasn't your night, but is it ever?**

## 9

**"But he who dares not grasp the thorn should never crave the rose."**

It's not always easy to talk to strangers. You normally never do. Sure, sometimes the occasional old lady chats you up on the bus. It's just a part of life in the bustling city. It's never the beautiful women that talk to you, even when they do get on the bus.

It's been months since you told yourself that you would talk to one of them. Your dating life hasn't been alive since your first kiss in middle school. Now, you are in your late twenties. They say you become a wizard if you stick with it long enough.

Today, someone new got on the bus. She's beautiful. Sparkling brown eyes. Nice long hair. She has something about her that makes you think she could never lie. Maybe that's just your imagination running wild. You wonder what she would say if you proposed.

You got ahead of yourself there, but you know that girls like these don't stay in the bus too long. There's only so much time to talk to her. You start calculating. Your mental models play out thousands of Monte Carlo simulations. It turns out that the best move is saying "Hi".

You go for it. She doesn't hear you. Or at least she doesn't turn around. You're dripping sweat at this point. Instead of fight or flight, you chose freeze. After some time, her stop comes. She gets off the bus. You missed your chance.

Oh well. **There's always the next once in a lifetime.**



# 10

**"Hey man, you're getting better. A lot better, so stick with it, man."**



You had a lot going for you. You loved your wife, your two kids, the friends you made, and the house you built. Your future was shining bright at 25. The divorce didn't go so well for you. In fact, it was terrible. It's what made you homeless.

You had a slipup. A moment of weakness. You made out with a stranger while at your best friend's bachelor party. You couldn't and didn't want to keep it to yourself. You confessed it all to your wife of 1 year.

She began to do everything in her power to tear you apart. You decided to not get a lawyer since the divorce was your fault. It was the wrong choice. You ended up without a home, fired from your high income job, no parental visitation to see your kids, child support payments that you can't possibly afford, and even an alimony payment to boot.

You've been living in your car for two years now. You work two full time jobs. You're trying to make it work, but it's not enough. At this point, nothing you can do would be enough. You've considered fleeing the country. There's a warrant out for your arrest. You didn't pay your child support.

You've confessed a lot to your pastor. He tells you to keep going. He tells you to have faith in the Lord. You keep praying for God's mercy. The praying doesn't help keep the car warm during the snowy winter.



**"He said I didn't need to tell him goodnight. I say goodnight because I'm pretty sure no one else does."**

Your coworker is the only person that says good morning to you when you come into the office. It's actually something that you look forward to. It's a hard life. You work 60-70 hours a week in stressful management consulting. You walk on egg shells to keep your manager and clients happy. You travel three times a week and are never at home. But when you're in the office, you get a good morning from her. It's something that you count on.

It took you a long time to talk to anyone at your job. Before, you would just go in and leave without saying a single word. Sometimes it would be weeks before you talked to another coworker because everyone had their own long term clients. It was different when she came.

You met her in the break room. You talked about a lot in just 3 minutes. It was enough to carry a conversation for weeks. It was enough for you two to even swap numbers to catch up every once in a while. She would invite you to go out with your other coworkers. You had never gone before. It was never really your thing, but you went for her. Eventually, you texted daily.

Outside of the in person good mornings, the good night text messages are what made you sleep well at night. It had been a long time since someone had told you good night.

Tonight is the five year work anniversary party for one of your coworkers. You get there a little late because the client asked for an important report at the last minute. You walk in. You find her chatting with someone. You know him from the accounting department but never spoke to him directly.

You overhear her say something about you. She says that she's not sure why you're not here. She says that she's trying to be there for you. She says that you're a really lonely guy but actually kind of nice. You leave.

She hadn't noticed you listening. She texts you good night.  
**You don't respond. You don't sleep.**



**"I saw that my life was a vast glowing empty page and I could do anything I wanted."**

You rotted away your twenties. There were a lot of one night stands. A lot of partying. A lot of alcohol. A lot of recreational drugs. You believed in experimentation. You took it to the extreme.

When you turned 30, it hit you. You were directionless, aimless, and devoid of purpose. You were drifting in life unsure of where cosmic forces will take you next. You weren't in control. It was terrifying. You looked at the facts. You didn't have any money. All of your so-called friends were around you for party invites. The girls you wanted to date didn't want to do anything but sleep with you. You were in a dead end job. Even your mom blocked you.

You took the time to anguish about who you have become. The 18 year old version of you would have been ashamed. Sure, you lived some teen's fantasy, but it wasn't sustainable. It definitely wasn't positive either.

You almost overdose. The paramedics find you just in time. For some reason, you didn't die. That part stays with you. You have seen others not been so lucky. You become so grateful that you revisit your faith. You think that it's too late for you. Christ tells you that it isn't. You join a church. You go every week. You get baptized. You go to the bible studies. The Father of the church tells you about an upcoming missions trip.

You go to India for two weeks. You teach the word. You see faith grow quickly. You come back. You feel a calling to the pulpit. You go to seminary school. You spend years studying. You became the leader of a church.

You are doing a confession. Across the partition, you hear a young man whose soul is crying out in suffering. They share that they are sinful. They share their sin of fornication and excess alcohol. He reminds you of yourself. The past 20 years hit you like PTSD. You remember the paramedics. You remember God's mercy. You shepherd the young man. He leaves, and you stay behind. **You sit in silence, and it's enough.**