

Something Strange and Unusual

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Abstract—Now, I'll tell you what I need: restless winds and hummingbird drama and weeds in the flowerbed and a porch swing. Just for a few simple moments, before I leave again.

Index Terms—yeehaw, wahoo, yeyyee

THINGS I CLING ONTO

I'm abandoning the hope of making this first issue even a little bit cohesive, because I've been having one hell of a time starting. So, I figured that I'd rather have one burning-hot mess than nothing at all. I've poured myself a cup of cold coffee, my nails are adequately bitten, and I am riding a wave of early-afternoon melancholy. What better time to start than this?

I'm 23 now, and I have no clue what to do about that. My lower back hurts more often than before, so I guess the iron fist of old age is finally beginning to close in on me. Youth was nice while it lasted, I suppose.

I recently moved back Home to two new books. One of them is *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* because I've heard great things about it, and the other is *Kafka on the Shore* because it sounds really great and because I want to embrace that "graduate student that reads Murakami" aesthetic. Seeing that I haven't properly finished an entire book in what feels like years, this is exactly on-brand for me.

THE MAN WITH THE UMBRELLA

Before I left Rochester, NY I saw a man with an umbrella in his hand. I wish I could understand why the image of this man walking with a folded umbrella at the ready in his hand is so permanently burned into my mind. It was a borderline zany scene, at best. Perfectly average at worst. I still remember the heat, the wind, the texture of the road underneath my bicycle tires. Most importantly, though (because this is a story about the man with the umbrella and not about me) how this rain-cane swayed methodically back and forth in this person's hand while he walked. What a beautiful, miserably average memory.

I'M JUST VIBIN' BRO

It really is a shame that summer ended before it even started this year. This feels like a *placeholder summer*. I can't believe I exist in it, sometimes, but here I am, sweating and wishing it was winter.

I held an impromptu dance party in my bedroom a few days ago that lasted a few minutes, and I'm honestly still riding the serotonin wave from it. I was Home alone so I wasn't worried about disturbing anyone, and there, barefoot on that off-white carpet, I existed in perfect harmony with everything.

I think that I *needed* to start writing again. My old blog felt expired, so I ripped it out of the ground to start this. It felt good, to do away with it. I just wanted to start creating

things again. Times being as they are, it feels like I have a personal duty to write things down. I know writing helps me, and having something to look back on is always a treat. Lest I become buried in a graveyard of my own words, I shall continue to write.

GOSSIP, NATURALLY

I have been keeping busy with a small research project and other miscellaneous things here and there, but I have been feeling very stuck, very trapped. I have never had a good relationship with free time. Recently, this has become more of an issue. I often find myself pacing around, waiting for some kind of divine intervention for inspiration, for 10 or 20 minutes of focus, for any kind of fixation that will keep my mind occupied, for *anything*. Then, when it finally comes to me, I gulp it down and think "wow, doing things actually improves my mental health!" then proceed to willfully ignore that thought as some kind of corrupt reward to myself for doing something productive. With a hand stroking my scraggly facial hair I contemplate my escape from this cycle, and with squinted eyes I see some promise.

Often, on my bike rides around RIT over the last couple of months, I would wave to the deer that roam around close to the roads. These deer have, it seems, no real fear of humans or their presence. I am under the impression that if I sat on a nearby bench with a deck of cards and maybe a bag of carrots, I would soon attract an audience of them and we would smoke cigars and play rummy. We would gossip about everything: the weather, how the algae moves on the creek nearby, and maybe even about the man with the umbrella. I just waved, though, and hoped that maybe they gossiped about me.

OOF, IT REALLY BE THAT WAY, HUH?

One of my only personality traits is being bad at responding to people, even people I really honestly care about. I am really horribly bad at responding. I will never read a message unless I am, at that moment, emotionally and mentally ready to respond. More often than not, I am almost never emotionally or mentally ready to respond. This is something I have been working on, and something I will continue to work on, because I don't want to sour a relationship just because I'm bad at responding to people. It piles up, though. I will go days without responding to anyone because I'm just so overwhelmed by it all. For some reason, the only place I am granted immunity from this is with emails. I am very good at responding to emails. Maybe because they are more formal? I like how email chains typically have unspoken ends. With texting, it feels very ambiguous: if I don't respond to something that (to me) was an obvious natural end to a conversation am I a piece of shit? And, if they don't respond in the same situation do I have any

reason to be hurt by that? I just feel like garbage if I haven't sent the last message because I don't want people to think I'm ditching them. And, it's much easier for me to just absorb the pain and always send the last message and feel like *I'm* the one being ditched, even though I know that is almost never the case but is instead something my insecurities lead me to believe. So, how does my lizard brain cope? By not reading or responding to anything. Great thinking, Greg, super great interpersonal skills... How about you go find some bugs to eat and a warm rock to lie down and maybe you'll feel better, you cold-blooded bastard.

DESK PORN

One of my dreams is to have a room in my home that has a really big desk in it. This desk would ideally be *very* big and *very* sturdy, and made of some rich, dark wood. It would be larger than the door, and have no screws, bolts, or fasteners. It would be carved out of one very large piece of wood: one unflinchingly sturdy unit of mass. It would be so ruggedly large that the house would have to be built around it, because there would be no possible way for it to have entered through any door or window. My hand would run over its surface and I would smile and think to myself "wow, what a desk."

JUST SAY IT

There are things that I'm afraid to write down. I have found that confronting such things are very productive, but very difficult. I once received advice from someone that if you are trying to write poetry, or any kind of meaningful prose, write about things that you are afraid of. I'm not talking about spiders or snakes or waking up late for class. I'm talking about the gray storm clouds that swallow heartbeat thunderclaps whole. The monuments you spend mulling over in your mind that you are too afraid to reveal to others. The letters and words and phrases you would never ever write because it would put you at risk for being forever misremembered as a horrible, anxious fraud. These things are essential for progress. It must be better to confront these things, right? Do they need to be tagged with disclaimers and warnings? Perhaps. A more appropriately label might be "this is a part of myself that I am working on, because I am always and forever will be a work in progress."

INTERSECTED

While I was driving today, I turned down a small road to drop my mom off at her friend's house. In front of me on the larger road there were two cars that, one after the other, also turned down this smaller road before me. I wondered "what if I sat by this intersection all day and counted the longest number of consecutive cars to turn down this road?" I suddenly became so happy that I was able to be part of such an unlikely event. Three cars, right in a row, turning down the same smaller road. It's an interesting problem, now that I give it more thought. For any intersection, what is the probability that a car will make a particular turn? I will leave this for another time, and simply harvest the small amount of joy it brought me and tuck it away somewhere safe for now.

TREES, AND HOW STURDY THEY ARE

"This looks like a good place to sit." We clambered onto the massive fallen tree whose roots were sprawled out at one end and whose foliage might have grown at some point long ago on the other. It was sturdy, and my open hand inspected its bark after I had managed to sit myself upright on it, my legs straddling a fraction of its circumference. It felt powerful, even now, and I considered the world beneath its tough exterior. Were wars waged there? Did people suffer and cry and forgive deep inside of this tree? What sweet things would lovers whisper to each other in this hidden world? That was just nonsense, though, and this tree was real.

EARLY RISER

Sometimes I'll look at my breakfast plate and think "now this is a breakfast that my grandpa would be proud of." One egg cracked inside a hole cut in the center of a slice of bread, and pan-fried on both sides with butter and salt and pepper. One beautiful egg-in-a-basket. Black coffee in a glass. Not a cup. A *glass*. There is something so emotionally raw about drinking black coffee in a glass. You might be proud of me, for finally coming to like coffee. And someday maybe I'll wake up early with the newspaper and wait for someone I love to emerge from the bedroom. And, after I lower the paper and meet eyes with them, I'll ask them if they want me to make them breakfast.

RABBIT BLOOD

*Little did the Rabbit know,
Painted on the winter snow
Was crimson Blood from heartbeat's end.
Rabbit never spoke again.
Wolves will eat the Moon tonight,
Rabbit's fur, no longer white.
Keeping time with bloody throbbing,
Rabbit kept his vigil,
sobbing*

AN EDGE

I still remember when it hit me. I was doing something on my computer, and suddenly the entire world became one very long, very dark well and I was clinging to its cobblestone edge while my feet dangled into the void below. I got up in a panic, and frantically moved around my room, hands pressed against my walls for support and my skin trembling with this horrible and mysterious anxiety. "I need to go, I ne- I need to move and go somewhere and keep moving and -" I managed to sprint down my stairs and hop on my bike and the world started to become slower, less frightening than before. Before I knew it I was sitting in a empty parking lot, relishing in the freedom of the wide-open space. I stared at nothing and waited for it to pass.

I'm not sure what that was, but I am afraid of it. I had a similar experience when I had gotten too high, but I was *sober* this time. This kind of anxiety had no place in my "regular" life, right? I felt so unhinged and disconnected from everything; nothing else mattered but movement and open spaces and *hanging on* until I could clamber back up to reality.

MAYBE REGRET IS RESERVED FOR THOSE WHO AREN'T
HAPPY WITH WHO THEY TURNED OUT TO BE? OR MAYBE
IT'S FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOTHING TO BE PROUD OF?

BACK PORCH

Cigarettes and nail polish.

*We will probably never get around to having any decent
seating on our back porch, but it's just perfect for now.*

"One more drag for the road."

Half-concerned remarks about the spider webs.

"Maybe it'll get the fly."

*I don't think anything bad is allowed to happen back here.
This small block of concrete is our kingdom, and is meant
for music, conversations, and. Silence.*

There's not much to look at, but it's just perfect for now.

A QUICK NAP

I sunk deep enough into those red cushions to find birdsong and bliss. My hand rested on the Sun's warmth and I sunk deeper. My mom sat near me, reading. I sunk deeper. The afternoon cradled my body in its reassuring embrace. I sunk deeper. I forgot about everything for a fraction of a second and I sunk deeper and deeper and deeper. When I woke up, I was molasses. Nothing had happened while I was gone. Everything was exactly where it was. I felt relief. Not even the Robins had noticed my hiatus.

ACCURATE, A TANGENT

I wish my microwave was more accurate. Like, wickedly accurate. I'm talking about precision to the thousandth of a second. I would slither out of my bedroom at 3am, pop open the freezer door, snag a hot pocket from the box, screech in a high-pitched reptilian tone (this step is crucial), and pop that baby into my space-grade microwave. With this new precision, I could get my hot pocket to just the right temperature. Let's say I wanted to do that. What would be the most efficient/reliable experiment method? I would probably start by finding the lowest temperature at which I get burned when I eat it. This might be tricky, because as my experiment grew longer I would be adding bias because my mouth would be damaged after every trial. So, to compensate, I would likely have to wait for my mouth to heal in between each trial to be completely unbiased. But, would I emerge from each trial with a stronger tolerance to the burns? I would have to make the assumption that I do not if I want to keep things simple, for now. I could revisit mouth-burn tolerances later. So, I find the minimum temperature at which I get burned and that would set the upper limit. Then, it becomes a matter of optimization. What makes a hot pocket most enjoyable? I don't want it to be cold in any regions, so I would also likely have to find the lower limit. I could do these trials over and over again though because I no longer am at risk of mouth damage. I might get full, though, and that would influence my perception of enjoyment so I would have to (in order to be fair) eat each hot pocket at exactly the same level of hunger in my optimization phase so as to not bias each trial in that sense. Now that I consider the heating process, I have no reason to believe each trial will uniformly heat each hot pocket, nor will it have the

same temperature distribution for each trial. So, I could just now assume a simple biased quadratic heat distribution for each hot pocket, where the origin is the center of the hot pocket. I make this assumption because hot pockets tend to be coldest in the middle and warmest on the ends, with some gradient in between. So, let's say I have found the lower limit where the origin temperature (which is the global minimum for temperature in the system) is not *cold*. To be rigid, I might need to define, quantitatively, *hot* and *cold* for myself, with the assumption that these perceptions will likely change from user to user. But I digress... I now have a lower and upper temperature limit and I begin optimization. I am looking to optimize a curve that tracks "enjoyability." The curve would peak when the following conditions are met: the coldest part of the hot pocket is just above my *cold* threshold, and the max temperature at the "extremities" would be just below my *hot* threshold. In this way, I could make my way across the hot pocket without suffering from either limit. The next step in enjoyability optimization would be to considering how the temperature profiles influence enjoyability: what profile would be most pleasant? I guess it would depend on how you eat the hot pocket. Most people start from one end and go to the other, but I don't see any reason to be so obsessed with that method. It is the most simple and straightforward, so for now we can stick with that. We would also have to assume that the timescale of consumption is so short that the temperature profile does not change during consumption. I will continue to consider this problem, but I think this should serve as a nice primer for further thought.

DREAMS

Before I fall asleep I write things down on my skin so that my dreams won't steal them. On my chest I record my desires. On the back on my hands I write ideas. On the inside of them I write secrets. My lips are for the things I never said but should have, and on my ears I write the things I heard but never listened to. On each of my fingers I write down numbers, because I like to think about numbers. On the area under my arm that I never properly wash, I write instructions for how to wash that area. On my thighs will be written stories I want to tell and on my calves I write the things that I am proud of. My eyes are a canvas for that first time I made eye contact with you because I never want to forget that feeling. I continue until each and every part of my body has words on it. And, when my dreams come looking for my stories, they will sit and read them. See, I have no control over them, but if my writing is worth reading I can keep them entertained and distracted until morning comes. While I sleep I can hear them laugh and cry and talk about me, but they will spare me my memories. And so I will continue to write stories to myself so that when it comes time for me to forget I will have the option to remember.

NURSE

There are rumors of vines that grow in the depths of the jungle, Slow, creeping vines that caress the gentle limbs of trees until they suffocate. These broken figures are forced to

watch the vines grow around them. A life that isn't worth living.

"Keep your worthless, broken apologies away from me." The nurse furiously spat, inching closer to the fresh block of stone on the ground below. Far beneath the earth, suffocated sobs could be heard, and the gentle wind caressed her as she knelt weeping above the fresh grave, whispering words of hate and regret.

WISHES

*Keep the crystals and the necklace,
Vanity will make me reckless.
What I want are sunshine kisses,
Autumn days and careless wishes*

JUST NONSENSE

I'm going to bubble over. Did you know that I was baptised in old coffee? I *will* bungle this, and I *will* think about it for years to come. I really can't stand how I linger on ember-thoughts, the dying coals at the bottom of the fire pit. Don't you see the flames!? These are here, present, licking the air and freeing themselves from their suffering. But, what is a fire without a bed of coals? I can't bargain with the elements, but I bring gifts of water and earth. The potter heats the clay and shapes from the flame a vessel to hold his tears. He places it back on the fire for the tears to evaporate, and he scrapes the residue from the inside of the pot and seasons his meal with it. He cooks it over the fire and eats it, juices dripping down back into the pot. The fire grows. He cries again. The cycle repeats.

WHAT IT'S LIKE

I recently pulled something in my back. This morning, while I tried to fold my blanket, I winced and groaned as I bent over, and sang another harmony on the way back up. This must be it for me. Consider this my retirement from youth. Now, I am destined to sit at dinner tables and entertain guests with how nimble I used to be. They will laugh and I will laugh and before I know it we are all laughing about how fragile things are. I thought about my grandparents, and how gingerly they moved around the house, holding onto banisters and taking their time with sitting down and standing up. I have finally inherited what is mine.

But no, I'm just sore. I am painfully aware of how out-of-shape I have gotten, and have recently been taking measures to correct for that. This is just a growing pain (I hope).

GIFTS

Cookie woman and flip-flop boy left for the ocean,
And they send us purple packages tied up with blue screams.
Don't let the wrapping deceive you, though:
These are gifts of whale-song.

WILD CARDS

I am going to die at this table. A handful of cards, head buzzing, spinning, panic. Candy-red wine and a two-of-clubs. I didn't even use up all of my buys. I still have letters to respond to. I can't die now. I still have a game to play. I can't die now. I still have things to learn. I won't die now.

BLOOD ON THE PAGE

I was so engrossed in the right-hand side of the page to notice the crimson smear on the left. This must be blood, right? I looked at my fingertips, which were usually the first to bleed. Nothing. My hands were free of any blood, up to my wrists, up my arm... still nothing. I rushed to the mirror to look at my face, but there was no blood to be seen anywhere. Expect for this page. I tried to rub it off, but it had dried by then. I feel like this is a testament to something, I'm just not sure what yet.

IT'S MIDNIGHT AND I HAVE EATEN AN ENTIRE BOWL OF CHERRIES

BRIEF REMARKS

Is that rain?
I think so.
It's a rag doll evening, and my limbs are weak with the weight of another lazy afternoon.

DIVINITY AND BLUEBERRIES

Quiet mornings on my bicycle, wrists tense, legs pumping up and down and up and down. I fought too hard to get up this hill to take it easy on the way down, so my breaks will have to wait. I imagine myself falling and my hands twitch; I reach for the lever to slow myself down, but I resist. I recklessly revel in the wind and my eyes are watering. Mourning dove dissonance from behind the trees mixes with heavy breaking. I'm embarrassed to say that my heavy, sweaty breaths kinda turned me on (yikes). There's no wind in this deciduous tunnel. I haven't been on this road before, but this must be the way. Right at the T. Right at the T. And follow it back Home.

THOUGHTS FROM MY BEDROOM FLOOR

*Morning fell from the palms of the widowed giants and
landed softly on beige carpets while the songbirds mourned
the death of the night.*

*A preacher could be heard behind the closed door, praying.
This is where things go to exist once they've been forgotten.
My jaw hurts, and it's time to get up.*

PICKING UP PIZZA (I ALMOST HIT A RABBIT)

Eating pizza out of a nondescript box and drinking apple juice.
Folk music, a puzzle (almost) and some kind of pleasant time together.

BACK SEAT PANIC

I had another episode of panic (or whatever the hell I've been having... I'm not really sure what it is, but its characteristic dizziness, mania, and panic have really been giving me a run for my money) in the backseat of my uncle's car today. It's really frightening. I'm afraid of getting it on my flight to Arizona. I managed to handle it pretty well I guess; I'll just need to have an action plan just in case it hits me. Ughhhh.

CLASSICALLY WET

Lacrimosa in the shower; it's dark on the back porch this afternoon.

IMAGES FROM THE PARTY

- "This is going to be my favorite hat."
- Red Bicycle playing cards. (disheveled, and maybe a beer can)
- Hands on knees, watching people smoke.
- Ants, everywhere.

AN OBSCURE MEMORY FROM A LONGISH TIME AGO

Glycerine eyes, a yellow couch, and words that couldn't seem to come out. Everything was so close. I could hear everything that you couldn't manage to say. You left so quickly.

REACH

I made some coffee tonight. Dinner-table musings are keeping me awake. I have things to prove, but I'm so weary. I think I want to be naked. Not for any particular reason, nor for any particular length of time. What to do, what to do?

SATURDAY MORNING

Kitchen: cleaned. Candle: lit. Glass surface: wiped. Speaker: bass-boosted. Pillows: arranged. Status: perfectly alone.

A BIT OF TROUBLE

The Old Spirit in the forest entered through my bedroom window last night. Quietly. Slowly. He stepped over my tense body and felt my delusions ooze out of me. My eyes must have been locked shut. I'm trapped here on the floor.

Before I fell asleep I whispered "My dreams, my dreams, spare me Midnight. A solitary reprieve for the first hour. Please, give me peace for these first twelve strokes." I flipped to my side, then flipped again and again and again until I was properly fed-up. I rolled right past Midnight, into One, into Two.

I like my dreams, truth be told. Though, I could use some rest. Dreaming is not resting. Sleeping is resting.

MUNDANE NUDITY

I have the incredible opportunity to be Home alone. I spent this morning cleaning so that I can properly enjoy myself. I think I need to do some more chores, though. I can't *really* find pleasure unless I have accomplished something. Damn shame. Regardless, I think I'll use this opportunity to play music as loudly as I'd like and be naked for as long as I please. Why not? I couldn't be more neutral about this urge; I have no real motivation to do so. I don't want to fulfill some kind of sexual desire, I don't necessarily want to revel in any kind of bodily freedom, I don't want anything in particular. I just want to be naked and... I don't know, make breakfast or something.

SOME BRIEF REMARKS ABOUT THINGS

I want to embrace these final moments. I'm only weeks away from starting something *big*. It seems so far away but I know it will be here soon. I'll be swept away into the thrills, the horrors, the love and the hate, into everything, into adventure. But right now, life feels still. I have nowhere to be, nobody to see, or any obligation. My eager body is being pulled into the vortex, though. It's hard for me to find peace in times of perfect, prolonged stillness. I get nervous if I'm not doing something. But I think, now more than ever, I'm obligated to push aside these feelings of anticipation. I don't know when I'll be back. I don't know what might change in my absence. All I can know is what is here, right now. And I'd like to enjoy that.

NOCTURNAL

*Open blinds and window panes,
On sunny days I hope it rains.
Moths are playing chess outside,
hiding 'til the Sun subsides.*

WHOA

My uncle said that I'm officially in my mid-20's and I haven't stopped thinking about that. So far, the best thing about being 23 is being able to indulge in that one line from Blink-182's song *What's My Age Again?*

WHAT

"Well that's just nonsense." His body was sprawled out on the carpet and his back was arched. "Of course the birds think I'm rude, I've never put my moves on a bird." He took another bite out of his apple and relaxed his back, lowering it to the carpet. "I'm not even that into birds."

OH BOIII

"Sir, I'm getting a strange transmission. Here, have a look." The alien handed the receiver to his captain. "My God. The earthling is lying on the floor listening to *Hooked on a Feeling* by Blue Swede and Björn Skifs at 5pm. The volume appears to be all the way up." The entire operations center was speechless. "Fucking beautiful."

MORE DREAM CONTENT

"You were in my *dreams* last night." What a powerful statement. I am becoming more and more of a proponent of analyzing dreams, given my history of strange dreams and my more recent history of restless and alarming dreams. "You were in my *dreams*." No, you weren't in my *dream*, you were in my *dreams*. To me, there is a huge difference. A *dream* could be anything, at any time, for any length. My *dreams*, however, tell a longer story; it feels more intimate and intentional.

GET READY

Hold on to the kite string tight, kid, everything is about to happen.