

MANUAL FOR DESTRUCTION OF URBAN GARDENS

JOSIAH MORGAN

“Among the more admirable kinds of lists is the menu.”

“Some lists are actually counterfactual, like daydreams.”

“The catalogue’s alphabetical structure and the structure of a corresponding state of affairs in the shop will be the same.”

William H. Gass

1.

I only want to talk about when it started. It was on the day that the machine came down from the sky. Buddy, my dog, a spaniel, dead on the street. Hit and run. Puncture wound at the top of his skull. Three inches wide and two deep. Crumpled teaspoon by its side. The machine in the sky, an inverted egg timer. No, an actual inverted egg timer. Something like a voice, but not something you heard, not with your ears, anyway, confidently declaring from above that this was the last week. The last week, that is, to purchase from places far and foreign, so prowl carefully and take care of them while you can. We all looked at each other and thought we had better get together a final soup soon. And the bowser on the street turned its head to look at me and said, buddy, buckle up, buddy, things are going to change, and I said, Buddy, go back to sleep, you’re supposed to be dead.

I have no desire to talk about anything that came before. It hovered in the air and never made a sound. Buddy had smeared all over the granite. In the fading light, the whole scenario looked a little like a Cezanne. Bleary colouring. Dotted texture. In Eppli’s absence I snapped a photograph of the implement in the air and picked at the foremost of my wisdom teeth. Or, maybe, the secondmost. It only took him a few minutes to run to the shed and employ the shovel in this accursed business. The shovel was badly malformed. It was dented in two places. I know how it happened, but I have no desire to talk about anything that came before.

To talk about the earlier time would be to forget. It was a foul machinery. The wretched thing was buried under layers of rot and rot. The neighbourhood wandered by in phalanx, smiling and nodding, gifting us cheery hullo, as if we were doing something other than burying our melted pet. Oven dish. Petri painting. As if something wasn’t watching us all from in the sky. Or, from, somewhere, elsewhere, inside. My sheets had fallen from the washing line into the dirt. Cruel joke. It was covered in dirt. In the wind it made a noise, it sounded like it said Elaine.

Sometimes, I have nightmares that my mouth is all clogged up with mud. The thing in the sky was pristine and shined. Buddy’s blood seemed to soak my dreams. I dreamed

things not unlike a Mondrian. Precise. Geometric, ninety-degree angles. All measured and certain. Though the numbering system itself seemed a little unstable, at least these days, yes. In the dreams I remembered Buddy growing fangs, sinking them into the flesh my elbow, licking the blood with that easy-roll tongue, purring contentedly in opposition to the dog-body masses. I always forgot about the teeth when I woke up, until I started writing these things down. He was a shining dog. I used to pass the time watching the neighbours throw him sticks, now the neighbours look at me with burning eyes and scary, uncertain stares; only so much can be done.

My tongue turned to dust in my dreams. When it rained, the machine seemed ephemerally protected and innocent. I awoke one night to hear our small, domestic egg timer sound its alarm from the third shelf. I don't know why I hadn't gotten rid of the thing; I suppose I found it's presence calming, Mona Lisa. Rounded. Jittery. I knew it was the one given us by Eppi's mother on our wedding day. If not, it might be from the side of the road, our study days. So I went to check on the timer and lying on the parquet was Buddy, stomach torn open, smiling at me with his friendly-friendly grin, gesturing at a lattice of metalworks and buttons, flashing and science-fiction. A total inability to process. Picked up Descartes from the shelf. Understood not a single word and still slept with it under my pillow in the hopes it would help me articulate.

Lips gradually locked up over a period of a few weeks. It made strange noises at night-time. Buddy became a fixture in our cellar, affixed to the wall, it was cruel, I will admit that. I kept picturing shoddy horror movie images, The Poughkeepsie Tapes and Don't Breathe and the images of the bodies in the walls in Sicario. Falling. Degraded. Buddy's bark was louder than most dogs. Or maybe it just seemed like it was louder than most dogs. Not that he was a dog, he was a robot, he was metal, he was machinery, he had revealed himself to us, there was no pretending anymore, I dismembered him, limb by limb, cutting the wires as I went. His heart was shaped like a jar and had two nodes that connected to multicoloured wiring; this I connected to my phone and it worked a charm. Every time I visited porn sites, the phone told me I should engage with Virtual Reality bestiality, a targeted advertisement if ever there was one, but I was more likely to deconstruct the idea than masturbate to it. I actually at first misread the advertisement, thought it was trying to convince me of the merits of sex with fog.

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE:

Inability to talk. Describe the egg timer machine. Describe the latest development in the dog saga. Describe it in relation to somebody else's art. Two short adjective based sentences or lone verb forms. One sentence which is a certainty. The next sentence is an uncertain form of that sentence. A large narrative jump happens. Two descriptive sentences about the large narrative jump. The protagonist misperceives something and it possibly reminds her of how difficult her story is to tell.

[The protagonist eats one of buddy's screws

The protagonist pisses into buddy's mouth

She puts the rest of buddy in a jar inside her fridge

She takes out an egg and puts an egg timer on

She feels the baby inside her, immaculate conception]

2.

I could count items on the empty street. Nineteen granules of salt. One million and seven hundred and thirty six granules of dirt. Two empty milk cartons, only one lid. One hundred and two point seven five nine leaves. Fifty one point three one two of those leaves fallen from oak trees. Zero chestnuts. A torn long sleeve shirt size eight torn into three somewhat equally sized pieces and emblazoned across the front it says mummy's little girl. Three small bells. The wrapper to a block of white Hersheys chocolate. A letter addressed to one Timothy at twenty Hillcrest place post code eight zero four two. The dregs of a crate of beer. A twelve pack four point seven percent. A crate. Thirty eight or maybe thirty nine ants. Two ladybugs. One undergrown and trampled bird carcass. Fifty eight stones. Four dropped locks of hair. A misplaced pair of women's lingerie, black and with a large hole cut out of them where the ass would hang. Approximately one half of a pair of scissors. Three crumpled up pieces of A three paper with a list of names on it:

Vladimir Nabokov,

Olivia Murray,

Nicolas Morton,

Gillian Andrews,

Isiah Medina,

Yush Raje,

Michael Banzon,

Simon Johnson,

James Ford,

Sarah Mitchell,

Julio Williams,

Hannah Lamb,

Olivia Pitts,

Ocean Browne.

There were, in total, seven hundred and two items on my list of things found on the street. It took twenty three hours and twelve seconds of consecutive labour to produce the record.

The corner of a damp piece of paper. Three globules of spit with green chunks in it. One second-hand from a watch. One hour-hand from a watch. The fastening half of an earring. A Big-Mac carton, the top cut off, a swarm of bugs meandering on top. Plastic wrapping that reads grow your own dinosaur just add water. Listless, uncountable atoms. The waves of transmission from my telephone to Eppi's when I left my lunch at home. Six litres worth of rain spread over an area of seventy-six square meters. One wedge of orange. A smattering of orange peel. The top four centimetres of a used condom, the bottom torn off and wandering somewhere foreign. One roll of tums. An out-of-date address book. Business card of a manufacturer of a glass brick. Key to lover's apartment. Note to lover from lover's mum substantiating lover's unhappiness with lover's spouse. Unpaid parking ticket. Canadian dime.

The sole of one size eleven shoe. A torn-up telephone cable. The wrapper to a second condom. Grass shavings from some back yard or other. Two ladybugs crawling back and forth in fashionable equilibrium. The torn-up bumper of a white vehicle. Scrap metal. Two isolate shoes. A speaker blasting some form of newfangled rock and roll. Swinging, or suspended, multi-deck cities. Improvements in the flight direction and location of gold balls. Automatic boot and shoe cleaning machine. Sonar pulse emitting submarine cable for guidance of surface and submarine vessels, and their detection with special reference to an investigation of the Loch Ness monster. Three batteries, AAA. Abandoned bib of a baby.

One of two blue latex gloves. An abandoned wrapper for Earl Grey Tea. Glad-wrap snap-lock sandwich bag. One wall climbing plant. A four leaf clover. Six smattered, crushed-up pools of eggshells. A nondescript but patterned print. The butt of a cigarette. Unrolled filter paper. Cone with its head ripped off. Ten alternative business ideas that will blow your mind! Thirteen celebrities you forgot existed! Seven smudged footprints. Page from Nabokov's *Lolita* listing members of Dolores' class. Two meters clearance. Some meters of rotten piping. Some meters of non-rotten piping. Two half-bricks strung over a fence on display. Snoopy the dog poking from a letterbox.

[\[588 more\]](#)

3.

The baby lasted a little longer than two trimesters and I had ticked the days off on the calendar and it was with a little red pen and I took a photograph of myself the day I found out about the dead thing and so I printed the photograph out and held it and looked at it and I tore it up and I threw it out on to the street in eighteen minuscule pieces and one slightly larger one and the shirt I had on in the picture said Justin Bieber Farewell Tour 2037 on it and I watched another three months pass and another month and I got a tattoo of a fetus on my neck.

4.

Eppli had told me that yes we would go out together,[the fourth wall has a hole in it[the rain trickles through in rivulets;[the third wall is painted pink and gorgeous[it spits an image[the hole looks like something moral[I fill it with my fist[the cavity]back and forth and up and down] or mentioned offhand in a metaphor]of the jostling trees]as the clothes my mother birthed me in[a slow tap on the shoulder and a hullo]parallel to the runway]visit the drugstore and file the new prescription. They were medicines[smelled like[if that fourth sense[for it is, always, inside,[the radio jams on from another room[neon exit sign]Suzanne takes you down]the other five]still existed[honey]for the heart. Eppli had a heart condition that meant he might die[our entire lives were spent[wasting[every filthy,[shit-stained, abhorrent mode of resolute[he was[too much[time]and too fast]strong]destruction]stinking piece of refuse that we'd propagated]away in the corner]waiting for things to happen]if he did not take his medication. We had been living together[in an official capacity[the volume of the apartment[it was painted different shades of ugly[that old Twilight Zone episode called The Eye[which stares back at us[in all[or as many[uncounted]as can be]our revels]and we stare back at]of the Beholder]blue]was almost unrecognisable]recognized by others]for two years and one hundred and seven days. Eppli was always[or almost[at least[as opposed to when things had gotten out of hand,[like the gas alarm going off and me allowing everyone to sleep[I had no idea[just as I was always bad[or self-conscious[I suppose I was self-conscious[no[nothing major, at least, only strict adherence[much like my mother[my father paid thousands of dollars to project her[not on the television[that foul, outdated[historical]machine]screen]cremated ashes into outer space]had been]to compulsive conditioning]thing had ever been diagnosed]about my own inability to participate]about[at guessing games]the danger]peacefully inside the house]that one time at the park, for example]when it mattered]always]early. He hated[only a few[a minuscule[really, infinite[no]small]number]things]being late. It was on this day that we[myself[whatever however that[selfishness,[to use the basic[the way[toward[facing]even[or odd[two sides]Jung's Shadow]of the coin] if you must]without a face] the front]not away from]against excitement]words]callousness, narcissism]means]and also Eppli]would go out together that it happened. The shower was running[as fast[if speed[never[rhymes[not a poem]with ever]tried the stuff]is the correct measure of these things]as it could]behind the locked door. I could hear[as far down as my heartbeat,[that gaseous[almost[though less[regressively and continuously[on and on]getting smaller]than most] nauseating]beating]even]the water dripping in rivulets. The dog was barking at a[humming]bird flitting from branch to branch outdoors. I hammered[with no tool,[though this would have been[could still be, if those who navigate time[away from the faces on their wrists[which may as well be livid[a jovial[to only employ strange adjectives[deformed, emphasise the final[for it is the end,[the final]yet to be[or not[knot]to be]seen]act]almost deadly]syllable, iambic pentameter]one must read extensively]father]with hairiness or freckles]or living rooms]in their machines would just choose to pay attention]helpful]only hands]as hard as I could and screamed Eppli's name. There[behind that tall-standing]it had taken us months[not recently, years ago,[the year that that French ship[or was it Spanish?]went

missing in the Pacific]really]to hinge the thing]white-standing door]was no response. I remembered what Eppli had told me[I have a strange kidney]he never liked to eat the kidney[rumours circulated for a while about a cannibal]you are what[who]you eat]circle inside our neighbourhood but that never amounted to anything]beans]condition that means I'm not allowed to ride a motorbike]the first and the second time that we had met. I sat against the wall[flat[those places[that grew beyond places, into habitations of thought,[entirely interior]moreso, less so, really]I had lived]and consummating]and waited. I did not know what I was waiting[around[unlike rather than like[what a hilarious[not that I[or anyone]laughed]misunderstanding]a circle]without arms]for. A memory of Eppli walking foot by foot[how else[do not turn this[all the time[with complete collapse of recording[visual[eyes[looking[I]glass]and eyesights]and aural both]utensils]around and around]into another fucking question]can someone walk?]along a tightrope flitted into my mind. It had been over three hours[it was the machine that made me like this I had always[at least as long as it had been a part[and not without]of my life]known it and it had always been true]and the rivulets kept running. I finally decided to pull out my hairpin,[always worn[as far as an item[object in a gallery found on the street placed in the context[like a conversation,[one of the things we speak[not like the things[drinks]we avoid]to each other about]funnily]of absolute white totality]like it can be worn]at the most inconvenient of times]to ruthlessly unlock the locked door. Behind it the rivulets kept[on]dripping onto his slumped body. He might have just fallen asleep[it was something he had done[though of course he would never admit it,[like a crime[barely[as far as my knowledge[which I will admit is in its very[limited]nature rather limitedextends]a rapist, my Eppli]or something]he would refuse to admit it]before]if not for the matted blood on the shower mat. Just last night Eppli read me a poem[the only poetry book[not in the world,[the[nation]country]the universe]on our shelves]by Charles Bukowski right before bed. He looked beautiful in his tight green t-shirt. He was not breathing, sprawled, light years away, sexy. I knew[with my brain,[not a machine,[oil[sinking]and rust]not like Descartes]neurons firing]what I had to do. I ran down to the kitchen[all metal[iron and tin[beans]and ore and copper and silver and gold and aluminum and steel]and metal and metal and metal]and grabbed the serrated bread knife. I carved[not unlike the petri[remembered fondly]not without some[or, actually, a lot, much more[the exponential curve threatening[in an entirely different manner[it was all[growing]internal, you see]to the egg timer]to overwhelm]than some]hesitancy]from the hours in the lab[dish]his face, flayed the cadaver. I stepped[crawling[into some manmade[or[that foul]smell started to permeate my skin,[sweating relentlessly]probably[much like Buddy[that machinated[I didn't want[not at[site]all]him, not like this]terror]in the last days]enjoying itself]against the format of the day]my body, my nerves]conjunctive]man]hole]is what it felt more like I was doing]inside it. I turned[the roulette[I had not gone to the casino often, was not an addict,[not to that[though my mother had a friend whose husband couldn't stop]he cheated on her and spread his genetic pool unnecessarily and then advocated[not with pickets,[lick it]not with a fence]for a new eugenics]pressing buttons]anyway]was not much at all, I mean it]wheel]into Eppli. The egg-timer outside[though in many ways it was inside[us]now]continued its countdown. I realised that it must not have been our dog barking at the bird from branch to branch. Eppli had been unable to finish any of the

Kafka books. He had worked in a sex shop of all places. He had told me my vagina looked like clockwork. I had always felt an affinity with Buddy. There were wind-up birds on the mantel. I leaned down and tasted Eppe's blood. It was like nothing I had ever tasted before. Eppe held an egg timer in his left hand. There was another shoved awkwardly inside his anus. I took it out as carefully as I could. The alarm went off. I threw the egg timer up in the air and it did not fall back to earth. I heard a jar smash in the kitchen. Behind me a voice said Elaine. I knew without looking it was Buddy. He spit[it was not with his mouth[it was gaping[he had invested[if it can even be said to be unusual]in the internet to find out more about the term]and vacant]but with something resembling it]my own piss out over my back. I would have run[with my[or I hope my]legs]if my nerves had been working. It seemed[that reality was receding away from me, that I was constantly being watched,[Rear[asshole]Window]that there was no way out, that there was something inside the egg timer keeping track of all my movements and I couldn't get away]I could not move at all. He started to nibble[more like chomp,[a curious word,[as far as words can go[as if they have[the ability[ability[desire]itself]to grow]feet]ontologically]all onomatopoeia and thud]he was ferocious[at my toes. Now I'm stuck[can't breathe,[throat's all clogged up[unable[fucking[horrific]retarded]to drain]with mud]can't move]in Buddy's mouth. His jaw[it's so[butcher-like]sharp]won't let me go. Eppe's body smells[I suppose it always did even when he[tried to change the nouns[duck, America, chair,[it was always too small[infinitesimally]in accordance[discord did not exist[not the way[it had[never]always been]it did in the sky]here]with the rest of the universe]so]for him]Eppe, he, Elaine]after a little while]was alive]a little worse every day.

5.

‘there was before the event and there was after the event’

i was told by history

it was time to start my record collecting

it was time to read Ernest Hemingway

it was time to necromance Karl Marx

it was time to start the revolution

it was time to turn my body brutalist

it was the end of history

‘I had some cinnamon lube that came free with a dildo’

it was a joke about a bathtub filled with potato mash

it was semen that he found attractive, nothing else

it was inside of my body

Arno Schmidt was born on 18 January 1984

the disaster was defined by the fact it was processual

the only way to record was with the camera

it meant that we were playing by the same rules

it changed the game

it put an end to Ayn Rand

it told me to use only my own name

it was the start of something

a triangle had three sides

the building i live in was constructed on concrete piles in 1973

seven was a lucky number and thirteen was an unlucky number

‘a baker’s dozen’

the universe was held inside his hand

he bought rum named after me

we had the same middle name

i owned five hundred and eighty nine books

i owned two copies of Ulysses and two copies of Don Quixote

i owned thirteen mugs and two plates

these were things i owned

i had to let it all go

my writing only mattered to him

we wrote smutty poems together

they were blown away in the wind

Evelyn. Linda. Timothy. Kathryn. Jenny. Matthew. Stella.

Sarah. Felix. Jonty. Meg. Selwyn. Meg. Flynn. Annalise.

Will. William. James. Alice. Archy. Bridget. Angela. Andrew.

Harry. Abigail. Isabel. Philip. Daniel. Piers. Jessica. Claudia.

Annie. John. Mike. Armando. Rachel. Riley. Dan. Laura.

Thomas. Donna. Bella. Tom. Amelie. Isobel. Joseph. Gillian.

Rian. Liam. Rose. Robbie. Mitchell. Travis. Haydon. Richard.

‘how long did you think this would last?’

the newspapers did not work anymore

the printers were closed

there was no more reading material

books were burned on 10 May 1933

my friend burned his hand on the stove on 3 March 2020
he could not finish Franz Kafka's *The Trial*.

000

the table was clean

the table was the place the body was buried

the table was under the ground

the table was not a table

the table was a coffin

the table was waiting to be unwrapped

the table was waiting to tell us the truth

‘dig them up and dispose of them

to prevent them from rooting again'

the dog and the baby and the uncracked eggs

everything i left on the street

i dropped it all for nothing

‘MAKE any or all STYLES’

000

‘the sequences are logical

they are neither arbitrary nor absurd

“consensual validation”—

consents no longer profit us'

00

the butchery rack

the meat on the butchery rack

i became it

after everything else

the machines

the dog

the butcher and his sell

i became them