

Shoreline Quarterly

Issue 01

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Mango the Quaker parrot saw a big milestone this spring

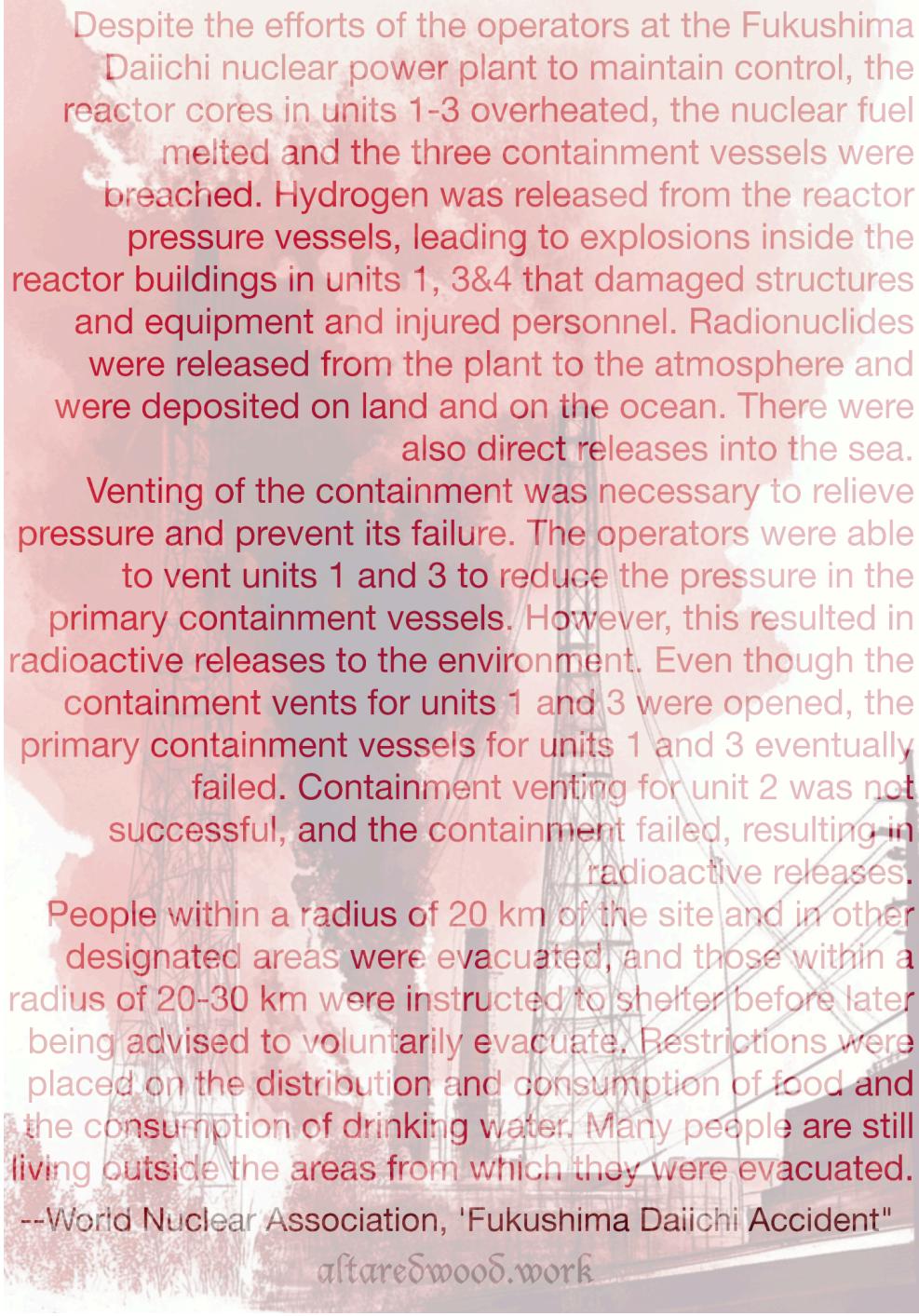
Shoreline Quarterly

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Despite the efforts of the operators at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant to maintain control, the reactor cores in units 1-3 overheated, the nuclear fuel melted and the three containment vessels were breached. Hydrogen was released from the reactor pressure vessels, leading to explosions inside the reactor buildings in units 1, 3&4 that damaged structures and equipment and injured personnel. Radionuclides were released from the plant to the atmosphere and were deposited on land and on the ocean. There were also direct releases into the sea. Venting of the containment was necessary to relieve pressure and prevent its failure. The operators were able to vent units 1 and 3 to reduce the pressure in the primary containment vessels. However, this resulted in radioactive releases to the environment. Even though the containment vents for units 1 and 3 were opened, the primary containment vessels for units 1 and 3 eventually failed. Containment venting for unit 2 was not successful, and the containment failed, resulting in radioactive releases.

People within a radius of 20 km of the site and in other designated areas were evacuated, and those within a radius of 20-30 km were instructed to shelter before later being advised to voluntarily evacuate. Restrictions were placed on the distribution and consumption of food and the consumption of drinking water. Many people are still living outside the areas from which they were evacuated.

--World Nuclear Association, 'Fukushima Daiichi Accident'

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Is the Horizon Guy an icon for this era?

“I found myself in a bit of a predicament, I’m in the air right now and I’m just kind of soaring around.”

Richard Russell, a ground service agent for the Horizon regional air carrier at Sea-Tac airport, [commandeered a Bombardier propeller plane in 2018](#) and took it for a ride in the skies above the Puget Sound region for a while before crashing it into a remote island in the south Sound.

“Just a broken guy, got a few screws loose. Never really knew it until now.”



While flying around Mount Rainier and attempting barrel rolls over the water, Russell, the self-identified “Horizon Guy,” [conversed with air traffic controllers](#) over the radio as they attempted to give him instructions to land the aircraft while he mused about why he was doing what he was doing and what kind of maneuvers he could pull off with that plane.

“I’m going to go check out Rainier.”

Over time the Internet has given him another nickname—Sky King. While “Horizon Guy” hilariously captured the “regular guy gone sideways” energy of how he sounds on the radio, maybe the new nickname better captures his [inspirational impact](#). No—not for inspiring copycats, hopefully. But to serve as a symbolic figure in an age of ‘YOLO’ as he pilots his doomed craft over a volcano to do a little more sightseeing.

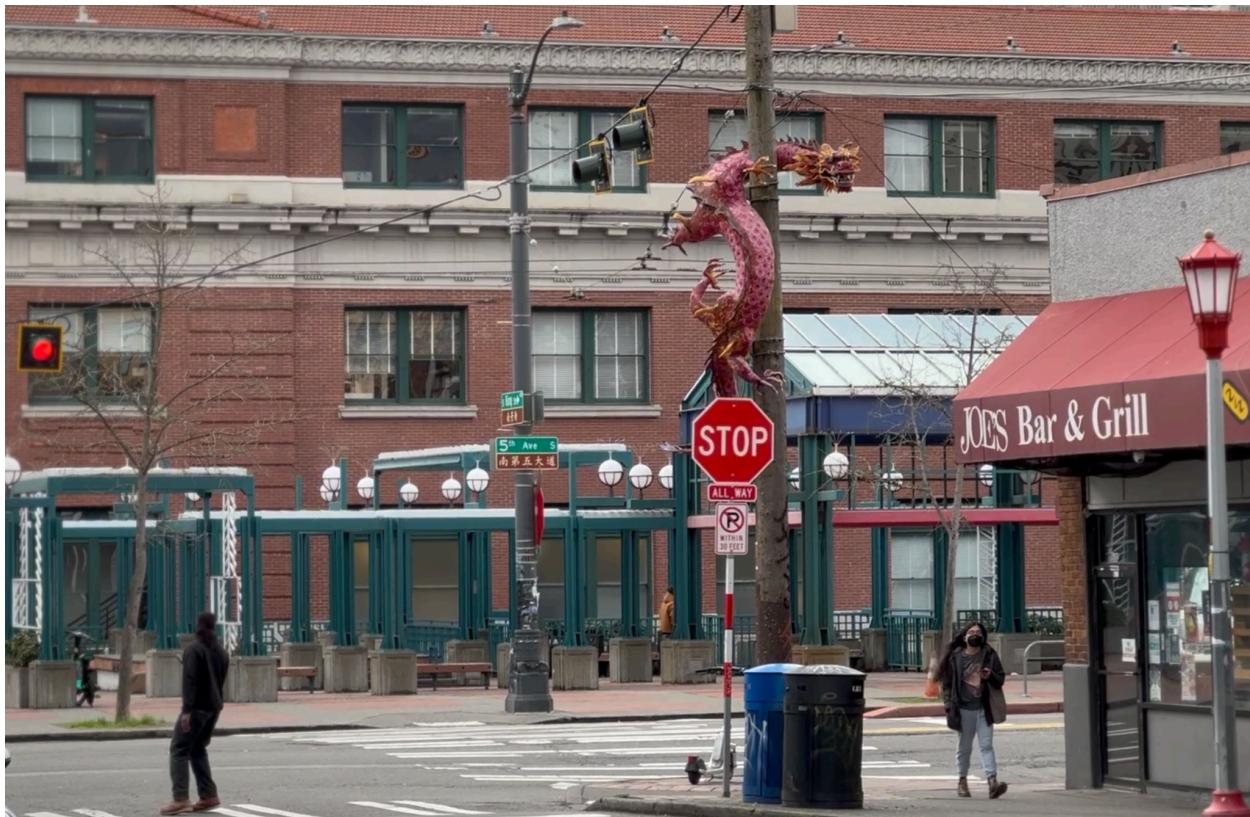
Shoreline opens new train stations

With the construction fallout continuing (especially along the 145th St. corridor) even now, Shoreline now has two light rail stations connecting the town to downtown Seattle and points beyond via the “1 Line.” They opened [on August 30, 2024](#). At least for now they are called Shoreline North station (at 185 St. North and 8th Ave. NE) and Shoreline South station (at 148th St. North and 5th Ave. NE).

Designed differently from each other (the south station has one platform where the inside doors of the train cars open to whereas the south station has a more suburban-style split platform where people enter via the outside-facing doors), the stations are both built with parking garages and bus depots.

I rode on the trains with my partner on the opening day and saw a celebratory atmosphere as local people welcomed the advances in transit that the Seattle area is making these days, however slow and uneven the progress has been.





What happened in the International District?

A couple years ago I made some videos about towns and neighborhoods in the area, and [one of them](#) (and [an alternate edit](#)) is about Seattle's International District. As I discuss in the video, Seattle has a sordid history of racist attacks on its historic Chinese communities, which include the [infamous mob attack of 1886](#). While neighborhood-wrecking riots may be a thing of the past, for now, the International District has seen a series of violent incidents including [stabbing rampages](#) that have [rocked confidence](#) in the area.

When I went there in the last few months, I will say that I saw it busy and peaceful, with plenty of visitors swarming its parking spots such that I had to find a place almost as far east as the 5 overpass. It's disturbing to think that these stabbing attacks had happened in those spots currently busy with locals and tourists alike enjoying the atmosphere.

Castle 2

- a short story
- by [Daniel J. McKeown](#)
- [pacificpelican.us](#)
- copyright Nov. 2020 - [published](#) January 2024

Intro



1

One building surrounded the courtyard on all sides except for a passageway out that meant that the two buildings snaked around in a rough rectangle until not quite meeting and there D crossed into this space and was almost run over by a rolling patient surrounded by orderlies just passing between the two building entrances, smooth and fast on the gurney's wheels over the sidewalk that, well D had to jump out of the way, not quite in that action movie way where people wait a little too long and then heave themselves and hurt themselves momentarily; but still a bit of jostling to get out of the way and having recovered his balance, D set about inspecting the sidewalk between doorways and it did look spongy like some sort of turf but the sight of another gurney roaring out of the building set him alight and soon he was roughly in the center of the courtyard, looking around at the 3 stories of institutional windows and the bits of shrubbery around him and he wondered if this really was the right spot but soon it became rather warm and he started circling the courtyard a bit, there were of course inexplicable bits of nursery store statuary and a few dry fountains to navigate and pretty soon he started thinking about his ankles, oh those monstrous ankles, why have you abandoned me here on the doorstep of middle age, got to make sure I walk like an injury-prone quarterback getting off the team bus in the rain, and soon enough this maybe wasn't somewhere to spend more than a few minutes and it seemed like very quickly D was looking both ways carefully before crossing through the opening in the building.

2

Grabbing the mic. Getting out there and letting my vision adjust to the dinghy room and all those pasty dingh-bats waiting to be charmed--will I make them laugh, or leave myself undefended against their childish instincts to ridicule me? "Sooo Chappelle compared what he does to, like, brain surgery or something. In the Q and A after one of those Netflix specials. Does he actually believe that shit?" What if someone offered the vox populi in response. "Waiiiit," he (yes, he) would interrupt. "Chappelle is the best at what he does. He is from Ohio, which by itself proves something, probably. Stop a minute and think about Ohio." "Can you

accurately describe Ohio?" "Challenge accepted. You see, Ohio is actually an ancient snake that got trapped below the glacier. When you see today's cities, they are just the successors to the organs of the snake. Cleveland is the mouth and Kent State is the brain, and of course Columbus is the beating heart, because Wendy's is based out in a suburb called Dublin (no not that Dublin, the one with the Temple Bar along the river where today they cling to Brussels paymasters even as the English have cast off the restrictions of the EU) and as you go down you find that Dayton is the bowels and Cincinnati and Toledo is the ass, shitting out massive waves of fertilizer through the Maumee River and causing algae blooms out in Lake Erie." "All well but we have lost the thread about Chappelle, unless he is one of the organs," and at this point D could barely contain his urge to cast aspersions once again upon metaphors, their excessive use in the culture and their rather disappointing explanatory power. "Chappelle is a genius," said the Rube. "The fuck did he even say that was funny recently?" "He is amazing at interrogating society's foibles" "Ok, thanks, that's enough from him. Security, please remove this heckler [nothing happens] anyway I think we have here a great example of the stale thinking of lame middle age comedy fan losers. They just have a narrative about these 'heroes' and 'geniuses' and nothing about how lame and behind the times these jerks have become, how they find themselves as conservatives because they need to stop the clock for their mid-2000s crap to seem relevant." Ok but mostly the audience sits there staring. Do I go to the next bit?

3

Blanket piles are amazing warm storms to hide under. The conversation is getting more sun belt centric when there is a Twitter dialogue about top-sheets. Like of course you have a clingy sheet and a top sheet, and atop that--let me pause for a moment to rage about clingy sheets not staying on the bed, like they have to put not enough elastic into each one, but why...why does one side always have to get loosened gradually, just another of many of examples of widely tolerated bad design--atop the sheets will usually sit a large blanket, something on a larger bed that might be called a 'comforter,' and then a bed spread or cover or whatever. But the real key ingredients have yet to be added: small, soft couch blankets and worn old cotton blankets and maybe a wool one and now, that seriously modern addition to the bed spread, the weighted blanket. Yes, that's what I go for these days, where you get the whole big chaotic stack all mixed together but the weighted blanket can be at practically any level, it can be the top-off layer or somewhere down the stack, but it has to be balanced somewhat along two axes: first it can't be so low down around just the legs that part of it starts leaning off the bed: unlike most blankets weighed blankets are subject to critical re-balancing maneuvers happening quickly after a long period of subtle shifting of the small glass beads inside due to slight gravitational effects (usually caused by a leaning position on the bed); the second axis to be concerned about for weighted blanket balance is left-right across the body: for me anyway, too much of the blanket on one side could easily cause it to fall off that way.

4

D wandered into the Byern Bakery in back-of-Ballard and asked to pick up the cake.

"You have a mask, you know you can donate them to hospitals." D was wearing a cheap paper mask from an already-opened pack, no they didn't want this, I am just wearing to protect the people I come across and of course you have to fucking bitch about it when I do that. Starting thinking, These people sitting there in Starbucks during a pandemic, they are usually older people, just sitting and talking inside the shop, there are outside tables and yet you can't just sit out there and have your self-important conversation of prattle and slang. I just want to get in and get my order and get out, masked the whole time. But so many dumb people just can't be cool with masks. Of course the stupid-ass CDC made it worse by initially speaking against them, but that early (if officially corrected) disinformation combined with a broad illiteracy about science in the American public, it's a toxic, dangerous situation, for sure. "I think your cake is filled with puke." I didn't know what else to say.

5

This was before they had those leggings with the part-see-through-stuff, anyway they were blue and black and they wrapped around those pretty legs and I waited for my smoothie and she was just standing there looking cute, starting conversation, back when you could walk up and of course it was already by this time quite weird to talk to a stranger at a place but people would still do it on rare occasion, there wan't a structural, medical reason to avoid one another and for the most part we were already pretty far along in doing that anyway. But today she was being outgoing and I was in a pretty okay mood and I took the bait and we talked for a little while and I guess it falls on the man to try to extend some kind of invitation and yet I extended nothing but a smile, perhaps unaware of the passing simplicity of those kind of times I don't know. The smoothie I would order was usually this matcha green tea kind of thing that I liked. It was creamy and sweet but had that green finish that was just so amazing. Crowded side walks of neighborhoods down in the city would mostly perturb me now but at that point I enjoyed my saunter out into the slightly sunny, reasonably temperate day out in town and the cruise ships would be coming and going and I would see them and container ships and more from my walk and then it was mostly just container ships after a while this last year.

6

The barroom talk turned to knives. D had wandered away from the enclosed courtyard garden and went around a corner and down a street, the next neighborhood over or so, the parking structure next and beyond and somewhere here along Pill Hill, and as D walked he couldn't resist and started singing 'Pill Hill, I like your shills/Bouncy tits and high heel shoes/Half the people won't get killed/It pays better than local news' But the walking and inspecting the local trees (D made yet another reminder to himself to get more proficient at forestry) and

listening to a podcast about the history of Byzantium had slowly vortex-ed his time scale until the evening's dark had led him to seek indoor quarters and a bar was only a block's wandering from the time when this thought exhibited itself and soon he was quite enjoying a bit of beer and the bar tender treated his stupid questions about the neighborhood with quick laughing squibs that were low in information but high in arm touching and overall attentiveness, so whatever. She was trying not to be obtrusive. Strange how women think, D groused to himself, jump out into the open and run back and want you to chase them--well let me get my chasing harness, to ride my kicking desire.

7

"Knives are part of one of my comedy bits," explained D. The table paused briefly before continuing a conversation about the evolution of Snookie. D tried to bring up the guy from that show with the tax problems but no one bit. "So the bit involves talking about big box stores like Costoc." "Oh like the guy who jokes about, like, it's not Woodstock, man, it's Costoc! That guy?" asked K. "No, this is an original bit by me. So, I'm like, you know: Don't those big bawx stores like Costoc have the ability to ruin anything. Hey, do you like açai chocolates? Try to eat fucking 500 of them! Do you like gouda? How about five pounds of it!! Not sure what the fuck saffron is? We cornered the fucking market on it you Philistine! BWAAAAAAA!" D pulled out a nice box cutter knife that he had ordered off of CackStarter. It kind of popped open and pretty soon he had an actual bag of açai chocolate candies and was slicing them into smaller pieces on the table.

"Acai chocolates are just like fascists. YOU FUCKING STAB THEM!" D screamed.

8

Is it strictly necessary to have a nicer box cutter knife? Nah but this one was just sensational; it had a wrap-around-lock action but also had a few convenience tools like a bottle opener. It had replaced the basic Craftsman box cutter knife that he kept in the front pop-open compartment on his dashboard mainly for opening packaging for items bought for use right away--of course it was probably always a good idea to be somewhat armed and while a crow bar or bat could ride around in the trunk the knife was right up there ready for action.

9

What is 'dressed' anymore anyway? Once you're dressed you're dressed even if that means 1 sock no shirt and boxers. For me socks will sometimes escape in the blanket stack, especially under the weighted blanket. I started wearing those ankle socks and that has been pretty much what I wear through the summer and there is that lurching transition where suddenly you're occasionally letting your calves get cold when you're say wearing khakis on a fall day up here in a fall climate with the mindless endless droning of leaf blowers, the guys who come and do them around this place every Monday, walking around the whole courtyard and just mercilessly blowing around whatever-the-hell, it was almost strange a few days ago to see them blowing actual leaves around instead of just dust and allergens, or that couple in that yard I walked by off of 8th where this dude is raking or whatever and

this lady is just leaf blowing away, it seems nasty like they should at least stop it for a second while you walk by and stare but no the machine whine of oblivion will drone on and on here in the suburbs. So what if I am just ambling around in sweatpants what the fuck is anyone expecting and plus I have a real palette of grays and a little bit of olive green and some blues, it's not that bad, or it well may be but then it doesn't matter.

10

So at the bar sitting and sipping whisky sat a tall fellow with a almost-handlebar mustache almost completely white around the chin and as the face wrapped around there was kind of a dark patch on the edge of chin and cheek on his long face where a few days stubble seemed to leave that area quite a bit darker in certain lights, and he had a ukulele sitting in his lap but held it with a lighthearted but firm command and soon enough he was playing with it, sounding correct and in tune as he wove a flamenco-inflected melody and soon D had sat on a nearby stool watching him play and nodding along. "You ever drive cross country?" asked the musician M. "Uh, me, no, well yeah," offered D. "Well, which is it?" But rather suddenly we had an interloper in our conversation. I can't remember exactly what the guy was on about but I think it was mostly ranting about the way interstate bridges had been built for many decades. "The reason I ask," continued M after the visitor trailed off, "is that I get all my inspiration from the continued progress of my travel, once I got going with my show it started everything rolling and now I just create based on--" He had a whole story around how he created, D thought, but didn't seem willing or able to articulate what process, if any, he actually uses. D had thought of songwriting as a three elements: a story (the song), a track (the sound), and a blueprint (the arrangement and production): the story was an open-ended creative pursuit: would there be lyrics, is a rock-style verse-chorus-verse structure (or some modified or simplified version of that) or an EDM-style build-drop-build structure; as far as the track, this is where decisions are made about what key to put the song in, what melodic elements to include and what instruments to use to create them. Within a set of parameters a set of tracks can be isolated from the overall piece and played multiple times until one take seems good. Putting those parts together into a whole and deciding volume levels and stereophonic spacing for the best of each of the tracks is the last step before being able to publish the song in demo quality.

11

D went to the bar's bathroom and went into a stall and kicked up the seat and was standing and pissing and looking at the wall and noticed a poem of sorts scrawled there:

he cour a blong the bring at at at at at
The comss and a mist and a mist and a mist
he beak and I the beak and I the beak and I
for the befon Street and I straight for the the

Before long D was out at the sink and trying to force some soap from the near-empty dispenser and he thought about how there had been so many bathrooms like this with no soap before the pandemic and a lot of the time no one did shit but under the circumstances this was disgusting even for a shithole bar, he thought as he dug into his pocket and dumped hand sanitizer on his hands and looked in the mirror and despite his better judgement starting looking at his teeth, was he annoyed by the slight alignment differential between the front + 1 two teeth so that the one on the left showed a very slight gap with the front left but it was again more due to alignment than tooth structure, oh yes the front + 1 right tooth has a shiny spot that was more or less visible due to some hard-to-pinpoint factor. D reviled dentists, and it was especially strange to him that a childhood girlfriend had gone on to become a dentist, aside from drawing any connection between her emphatic interest (tongue-wise) in the inside of my mouth and her subsequent career, it felt like a further separation between them, and this wasn't the relationship that was supposed to be the big one for either of us as either of us saw it it was hard enough to discern why we both felt that way when we also, well, both felt the way we did about each other. And D saw himself as loving his teeth so much he didn't want to show them to dentists right now. Charcoal dipped tooth brushes were an interesting fad: at one point I actually saw a multi-pack of them for sale at Coctoc, near the massive section of supplements.

12

The other side of the bathroom stall had a verse that D briefly tried and failed to place as the words of a star wordsmith of yesteryear:

The Metra train shuffles in about three minutes late
Conductor cranky from last night's binge, crackers
and ash stuck to the seat of his blue pants, says "Wait"
And in the parking lot Lew is still in his car, looking at options

Below what appeared to be a rant about PPP loans was another snippet:

Greg, sitting down on his laptop to use TurboTax
Takes a look at that ugly, lousy, no good number
The drop ship business, he has a whole bunch of snacks
For sale, 3 for one, and I can even throw in a tumbler

13

D saw someone at the bar from his Computer Society and started up a conversation with him.

"I talked to the recruiter that you told me about." "Oh yeah," he said, "those guys are all frat boy douche bag types y'know." "Oh yeah, I think we have all rage-added someone to our Mailchimp list." D responded without having really heard the comment due to not listening. But then the conversation turned to the intricacies of writing an algorithm to write a novel. D proposed that such an algorithm would be mostly a composition of a few component parts: perhaps simpliciticly, first one needs to words, then to take these words and make them into sentences, and then to arrange the sentences in some kind of logical order; and from that point, a

global capability to edit. "Words of course can come from a dictionary, or any book really. They can be assembled from letters, extracted from books, etc. Sentences are generally words put together under some set of grammar rules. Some kind of logic engine could be used to pick pre-composed sentences from a list in a plausible order." "For what I created, I used a machine learning library to create a neural net each time the system runs. Then I run three snippets of text through the algorithm; I basically just overwhelm a matching algorithm with a lot of data. And the prediction is the event, I guess." "One of the effects of this is that I am not neatly following the distinctions I set out earlier. The source of words is indeed some books, that I get the text to feed in, but the words that the neural net outputs are sometimes neologisms. I am not actually sure if it only outputs 'words' with letters included in text fed in--a worthy experiment to find that out, there." "But at this point, as you can see, I have some slight ability to create sentences. Call them sentence fragments. But I am working on an algorithm to sort them for logic, then one to edit them for apparent coherence and style." "Putting it together with some sort of narrative logic is key; now I propose this could probably be done by the right kind of fairly simple rule set."

14

The old metal cart stacked with stuff, like one of those old hotel soap and shampoo carts that make their way along the hallways all too early, this cart rolled around all the floors of this place. It was going to be replaced any day now, with a robot cart, but they had some production delays with the KeckStarter so the old one remained in use. The Director had an idea of keeping the old cart going too when the new AI-powered robot cart made its way here, to keep Tim at his post pushing the thing. But the staff whispered that was just sanctimonious bullshit, typical for the Director, and that Tim would be in the Basement Level before long--if the robot cart would just get here and they could do the unboxing video and then get on with it.

15

So before long D was at a table with this whole Gang now; it included the friend from the Home Computing Club and some old grizzled gold miners and a curious fellow with horn rim glasses and a stubbly, avine look to him who keenly watched the gold miner who was telling the fire story. "So, we realize that this whole tunnel of our old gold mine is on fire eh," and then he looks suddenly away from the little gas fire box that was set up a bit right up on the rug in the seating area away from the bar and over to the horn rim glasses fellow. "And wouldn't you know, Flea Bill and Cornish Will are running out of there all aflame, burning beyond recognition and letting out bloodcurdling screams, probably like when my man here sees a spider." The line landed flat and the man with the horn rim glasses shook his head slightly. D wondered whether he was warming up for a riposte or a retort or what. Before long he was brandishing a knife. "I just want to talk about how much I like this knife." He unlocked it and put it back before quickly rotating it open again. "It's a 'nice' box cutter knife. You can open boxes and all, just with a bit of style.

They even have brass knuckles with cute designs on them now. I don't have any of those but they look cool. Have you ever read that short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It's called "Brass knuckles, water sports and guitar" or something like that. So it has a Southerner character making his way up to New York and like, starting a school for learning cool and wild stuff like metal-assisted punching and music and this young woman hangs out with him and then a bunch of the Hamptons young people crowd show up and think it's all cool but then eventually they get evacuated by their parents or whoever and then they are not invited to a party at the end of summer but actually like apparently they are and like are also the guests of honor. And then he drives South again with his beat-up motor car and his Black servant: there is an extraordinary amount of casual and uncasual racism, ughhh."

16

The bar was running the ceiling fan. Elsewhere in the room a tourist tried to use a selfie stick to get one of those above-the-fan shots. You know, one of those shots from the movies that conveys, well, maybe that there will be drinking, or perhaps tension is being indicated by the circling of the fan--it is said that pet birds will see those fans as possible predators. D soon found himself trying to summarize a different Scott Fitzgerald work.

"Ok so this migrant comes in from the Midwest, maybe Minnesota, anyway, I think it is the most vivid passage in my mind (that or the one about the eyes of Eastern Europeans) and that may be a low bar but regardless I remember it being something like this: 'When I was growing up I was told to always consider my own privilege when considering the actions of my fellow man. Perhaps some deficiencies in education or character will stop them from being a proper Midwestern douche like yourself--'" "Now that's not canon," interjected the other, quiet gold miner. Apparently a fan of 95 year old novels. "Well, regardless, I the man is named Nick, I think. Nick Bongswiller. And he trades bonds. Apparently moves into town, just right next door to a wealthy guy with a mansion. And he sees parties. See, people come from all over, delighting in the festive atmosphere and toasting the seemingly absent host. Then Nick goes in to the house some time and..is it at a party when he first meets him? Gets called Old Sport." "Now we must consider the subplot involving Daisy. I think it may be common to mistake all that for being part of the main plot but never mind, so Jay Gatsby is staring there across the harbor at the woman he loves. Does he know her from back in the day? Has he become transfixed with her due to her beauty and status? You get the idea Nick isn't that interested in those details and perhaps I am less so. So we see Daisy and her current partner Tom and the whole thing, the parties and flashing cash, they are mostly to do with the pursuit of this woman. And there is the baseball gangster--is that someone Gatsby eventually runs afoul of? Are we really to concern ourselves with exactly how he dies (I don't recall) in contrast to the rainy and windswept funeral, sparsely attended in such contrast to those parties just a season or so ago. Nick thinks about a green light, and the gulf of water between the

two towns. Are we to see the author in the character of Nick? Then who is Gatsby? I have no idea."

17

The cart rolled by a Christmas tree with plastic icicles and silver tinsel and red and gold ornaments and a star on top and a whole-on manger scene with many shepherds and sheep and a large proud cow and more. The tree had been bought in a quiet Christmas tree lot just dropped downing a quiet dark parking lot near the road, a bit away from the grocery store and more in the strip mall and the spots where people would actually park anyway. Tim had gone over to the lot and asked the ladies working there for a "modest office tree" but they had managed to upsell him on a pretty nice one and he asked them about how business was. "Oh, it's ok, we set up most holiday seasons doing this." Oh, Tim wondered, so what do you do the rest of the year. "Well thanks," he said as he sized up how to grip the purchased tree, now tied back so its branches didn't stick out but now he had to either carry this tree about a block and a half back to the building and he decided to just put his bare hands on the trunk of the tree and grabbed two sappy handfuls and started carrying it like a festive lumberjack.

18

The programmer guy from the Home Computers Club was telling a story about some found footage he had watched. The video was found as a Hi-8 tape from some time in the late 90s. A man in a Santa hat with a beard is pushing a very old woman near Spaceship Earth at EPCOT. The handles are then handed off to a younger fellow, who starts seeming to drive sharply toward the camera, and the person with the camera appears to lunge away, perhaps dodging the metal foot stops jutting out at the front of the wheel. After a number of these attempts the person behind the camera yells "WHAT THE FUCK" and then the guy with the Santa hat yells: "You need to take a CLASS IN OBNOXIOUSNESS!"

19

The bar gang was rotating a bit; the Quiet Miner had to go run some errands, but was quickly replaced by a Soccer Fan. He started with his story about attending the World Cup 1994 match in Pontiac, Michigan between the USA and Switzerland. "The place was shaking like probably no stadium I can remember, people roaring when the goal is scored, and it was just a wild, rush-inducing scene, and they got out of there with a draw but it was really good." "Switzerland at this time being perhaps a bit more of a soccer power than they are now?" asked-said D. "They were pretty good then right--" "Well not so bad at that point." "Ok so what is just wild to me is that I saw the opening game in Chicago in 1994. Now here's crazy part--I was up in the end zone stands (this was the old Soldier Field after all) and I had a view from above of Jurgen Klinsman getting into a 1-on-1 and making a nifty move and just putting it in the goal nice and easy like a pass, and he actually had some more highlight-reel goals in that Cup but that was certainly an early statement; anyway it isn't that surprising to me that he was coaching his home country team, Germany, in the..was it the 2006 World Cup in Germany??..but it is just wild to me

that later in the 2010s he just ran USA Soccer into the ground as coach and left a qualifying miss (after he had left but the momentum was there) and a heap of rubble in his wake. That's just nuts." "Well, that's sort of like my son's club soccer coach," said the Soccer Fan. "He was starting his son at center forward, and you know he tries to basically coach it like football like a lot of coaches, anyway his son isn't that good but it isn't usually that big a deal, except if you want someone to actually make contact with crosses over the middle, maybe actually put foot on ball sometimes and shoot on the goal, but anyway there is a corner kick and someone barrels into his kid and he's all hurt on the field and the action is still going on and before the ball gets kicked out and the whistle blows he is already out there, in the middle of the field in his dumb warmups-coaches-outfit, crouching down and trying to protect his kid, like, like he's fuckin' Aphrodite protecting her child on the battle field."

20

D ordered another Scotch and walked to the table once he got it and paid for it. He sat down during a bit of the lull in the conversation, and he wondered if this was turning into a stereotypical bar scene with tired and dispirited patrons pushing themselves through this difficult middle zone until, well, until they're a bit drunk. He decided to tell a story about his nephew. "So Remus is a fan of trains, and at this point he was still small enough to have a little ride-on train that he circled. It was like on a track and stuff, pretty elaborate; now he got to use my old rocking horse, the spartan wooden carving that only a small child could balance on, when he visits his grandparents. I hear stories about that rocking horse and how much I loved it, and you know I can kind of remember that but when I hear stories about when I was a kid from my parents it has a strange glint of them really being at the point of digesting the experience, having gone the whole way on the journey more or less of parenthood at this point, and to me it seems increasingly distant and inconsequential. Well anyway Remus takes a spin and so forth."

21

The friend from the Home Computing club came back with a fresh Blue Moon and sipped expectantly to the story about car repairs being told by the vest wearing newcomer who was drinking a Whale Pale Ale. When he was done with the story, or had at least paused for a few seconds, the friend (whose name was Leon) started into a tale of his own. "It was only 4 o'clock as I pulled in to the small suburban park. Of course up here so close to the fucking Arctic Circle after all and what-have-you we end up with it getting so dark so quickly, so I am walking around the park vaping and he's come and gone, before I even know it, a cop pulls by and locks the gate of the damned park. So my car is locked into the fucking park! Overnight!" "So they even have a sign about that like it happens frequently or something, you're supposed to call the police non-emergency line and I say, fuck that, so I walked back to my place and like I said this park is only a few blocks from my house but c'mon right what bullshit. So I get up real early the next day and I'm sitting there waiting for them to open the fucking gate, I just posed myself up at a

picnic table with a big box of donuts and some coffee, and there they come by but before I was able to throw any donuts at the police car that jerk just drove off. Fuck that."

22

Tim walked around the third floor pushing the cart. Pretty soon he would be at the northwest corner and this was the side with the men's room and also the small lounge for families or whatever and here was where he would often catch a bit of TV. So he tuned it onto some sports network coverage of the English Premier League and he was watching the ball move around the pitch as they say and D walked into the place. "I am looking for my assistants." "Your assistants," asked Tim. "Well, they seem to have been assigned to me, and they told me that anyway, and they are just following me around and saying and doing quite peculiar stuff sure but why was it on me to question what they were doing, other than to call into question what nature of assistance they are supposed to provide," said D. "Well what would they, what are they possibly going to assist with if they are helping you." "A web site," offered D. "What web site," asked Tim. "Well, that's just it," said D rather unhelpfully, "if I were going to be assisted in doing something it would probably be in creating my web site," he borrowed his brow slightly, "unless they want me to show up with my Sawzall and right angle drill." "Well that's not useful, I have a proper drill in my workshop, and what exactly are we to be drilling right now?"

23

"I goddamned hate all the shit people say to me. Hey Tim, you're a really smart guy, but bleh blegh fuckin' do dumb peopleshiteandjustlistentotheircrap" His assistant (the first one, not named Starbuck eyed him with concern and suspicion. "You know we have mandatory reporting with our supervisor." "It's un-fucking-believeable, there I was sitting at the pancake breakfast diner and she is just sitting there with her family why do I even need to run into her, just going on and being with her douch bag husband, from Holland, Michigan, I should tell what she needs to fucking know." "Which would be what?" asked the assistant perhaps a bit indulgently. "That when you walk together through the Richmond and pick her up so she can reach some tree of something and later you are picking her up in bed and dropping her down where you want her to be, gently but firmly, in a way that she just can't help but react to with a toothy look saying I'm so wet that can't help but inspire you to go on, well, do remember her assurances that she was at Planned Parenthood just a few weeks ago, and then you meet someone like her after being with someone like that, well, what do you think someone is going to do as a reaction. Well, would surmise that the raccoons of the Presidio know more than they tell." "How can you know that?" "Well, I used to tag random buildings in the Richmond, also buried my beloved betta fish there in the Presidio, and there were always those critters scampering around there and up to California. So now you can't even, right, how do you just go out and stumble into ass now, with what's the fuck's going on, and that administrator thinks she's my Mom now." "Do you mean Ms. Roombiiosigan?" the assistant inquired. "The tattoos and delicious ass

that she hides are legendary, but she is dumb, and this whole place is run by malicious Triangulists." Tim speculated. "That is just your speculation," the assistant answered. "Aren't you going to recommend to me that I see a therapist," Tim asked. "Nope." came back the answer after a pause.

24

The institution was having an open mic night and D was up on stage as Tim and his assistants sat down. About 3 of the home's residents were carefully socially distanced on folding chairs. D went into some new material after starting with his old line about the hemp but re-worked with an MLM CBD product pitch with legalization now, and then the newer stuff: "- Hannibal Burress: one unfunny motherfuxker who took down another unfunny motherfukka; neither of them are funny: what are you saying Cosby is funny?!!" And of course two of the three ancient residents wanted to argue the finer points of Cosby's harassing-black-people tours of the 2000s, 'he had a lot of good points,' and then D managed to get out of that one and started on another bit: "instead of that crunching sound when it picks up some kinds of debris the vacuum should make like a video game coin sound"

25

Earlier at the bar D had recounted his coffee outing. He went on at length about the place that he had gone to, maybe it was a drive thru. He mentioned something about a person there having a face tattoo. Was it the person serving the coffee? No one was listening very carefully, but at one point the Home Computing Club member wondered if D was trying to make a reference to the woman with the face tattoo up at the bar there but then he was distracted by a vibration of his phone.

26

And the bar conversation continued. A new prospector was now at the table and he had offered a reaction to the coffee drive thru story, before sharing what was on his mind as the pandemic raged. "I have to admit, the closure of strip clubs has been hard on me. Hard on the whole prospector community, I would think." "Aww yeah," offered the Home Computing Club member. "Did you see those photos of them drive thru strip clubs they set up out in Portland?" "Oh they got the good clubs down there in Oregon, I mean in non pandemic times," said the prospector. "Allowing alcholholiol just a lot better in terms of rules and setup compared to what they got up in Washington state." "Well when you think they are going to reopen?" asked the waitress as she approached. "Y'all need anything to drink?" "I'm hopin', I'm hopin' by April of next," said the prospector. "Is that over-optimistic?" D wondered aloud.

27

Deep in the blanket stack. The day had ended. Well he had managed a quick conversation with Tim but he wasn't sure about Tim's insistence that his assistants would be better able to answer his question than he would.

D was wondering what had happened to his socks. The weighted blanket, again. But the coffee queen wasn't under the weighted blanket, she was off on the edge

and had the spread and some blankets but wasn't entangled with where D was and he thought about the way he had frozen when his ex had confronted him about her, like she had already written so many plans without running them by D and he was just there realizing that now driving his car up to near her place and as he dropped her off he heard her start crying like a whole lot all of a sudden as she was going to get out, just a minute before she had been tartly commenting about her finding the same things out about me that she had found and coming from that real confident col-draft cool-rage kind of place and here she was just about bawling and it was really kind of primal, D is thinking, she just wanted something so bad and then there was just this on-off about whether I was able to provide it and this extreme emotional release and then pretty soon she is out of the car and slamming the door and a few more cars rolled along the top level of the old double-decker downtown highway that was just about to come down and mark a new era and now we are here in that new era with this hottie at the edge of the bed instead of her hot little ass pushing her way to be under the blanket with D.

28

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The walk by and quick entrance into the car and before long Tim's assistant had coaxed a hooker into his car and he was rolling along to the facility, and while this was a strange and awkward request the assistant seemed ready with the money and, as he said "the only really weird part is that he is kind of old." In the back seat were a few different sizes of marked-down athleisure outfits in gray and the assistant asked her to put them on. "We got to walk through the parking garage, elevators, and whatnot." A small car entrance on the back side of the building, on the other side from the courtyard opening, gave the assistant access to the small underground parking garage and as they walked to the elevators the woman Sandy got suddenly hesitant, saying "I think I might go--this place is very enclosed--don't know about the energy here." The assistant tried to stay calm, like this wasn't an uncertain pilot project. "Let's let you talk to Tim. He'll straighten you out."

29

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Tim had set up an account with an app called Compowyon which promised "fun and lively companionship, escort services etc." and would match prostitutes with customers. "It's on the dark web or something" was the response when his assistant (the other, second assistant actually) asked questions about all this. But before long he was walking around with a notebook slinking in and out of rooms while the other assistant was cruising the known sex commerce corridors of the area in an attempt to pick up sorties. Now it was a bit of a sales job getting them to want to come near all this, and it was a time commitment, and involved going to the Institution. But Tim had found an abandoned conference room which he had set up as his very own pay-by-the-hour type of room with a beat-up old bed ganked from

a hallway where it had been left outside of a room (for whatever reason, probably the death of a resident) covered with what looked like dirty moving blankets and horse blankets: but it was better than some of the resident rooms and anyway not on the rounds.

30

D was eating his takeout ravioli in the courtyard. It was all in one of those thin plastic reusable Tupperware-style cups as for whatever reason D had decided that during the pandemic it was better to bring reusable cups and Thermoses and dishes to eat off of as he had started doing that at home with takeout and even though the refmmonwdaruons around surface contamination had lessened slightly D was still eager to use these new procedures for now and so here he was with his clear plastic bowl of ravioli that he had poured in there from the cardboard fastfood container that it had come in and now he is poking at the raviolis with a spork that he had banked from previous takeout and had brought with him for today's lunch. The Institution was just too close to one of those quick pasta places to pass up the opportunity and now he sat and ate on one of those series-of-boards-laid-across types and the gaps between the boards were kind of wide but he had the plastic bowl all wedged in there on an angle and he was flipping and poking the raviolis with his spork and instead of thinking about his upcoming meeting he was thinking about how he really dislikes that brown pasta.

31

Another evening at the comedy club. "Why do they call them snowbirds when they are snow-avoiding non-birds?" "I don't have any student loans [pause, milk the tension] I mean obviously, I am poorly educated: at least the president loves me, right? I love the poorly educated" "No? Don't like that impression? How about my Jay Leno impersonation?

'Myahh, wlook at thisss poor grammaerrr in thizzz locul paypper! Mynahh!!!!' The Leno act was being taken personally by the crowd. They did not sound pleased. "Ok, but the thing I can't figure out about this bit is, do you hate Leno or do you hate Leno being skewered. Because I FUCKING HATE LENO!!!!" "Fuck ^%*&^!!" yelled back the crowd. "Jay Leno is an abomination acting like he's a comedian!"

32

D took a hit off his vape. Cantalope something, and it had a nice light, fruity flavor. "I had a dream where a very large shop vac sat next to a standard size shop vac next to a number of small shop vacs." "Did you have to be there," offered Tim with a fairly charitable tone. The small TV in the corner was blaring a talk show. Some couple from Louisiana who had a small business, some kind of streetfront thing selling muffins or something, until the pandemic blew it all away.

33

A window overlooking the inner courtyard was cracked open a bit, and the rest of the window row was a bit fogged. The conference room had a bench at one end

with a gray pattern with little elves or gnomes printed on the fabric and and a table with those snoopy 60s ends on them and over on the side where Tim and D sat a card table spaced them apart as they stared each other down. Their assistants had just exchanged a series of demands and threats on behalf of the principals and now they were locked in a bit of a standoff. The layout of the card table led the parties to be divided along a diamond pattern. Of course in reality Tim had two assistants (only one of whom, the second one in normal order, was present in the room right now however) while D had no assistant. But for now he had someone assisting him. D had a reasonable amount of good luck with the ladies, as the haters saw it. But whatever he had going for him, it was not unprecedeted for him to run into someone attractive who wanted him and then wanted to help him and this young lady was moving into the second stage. They had met at Walgreens, at least they had stared each other down in the store and she carried it into the parking lot.

34

I pledge allegiance to the eagle who drops bags of drugs down on the land and that land is called America O; one nation full of drugs and powered by desperation and lies

"Let's not tell the doctor about his side business, not yet anyway," said the woman speaking for D.

"Ok, Carrie," said D. "Carly. Ok, Carly." Before long the doctor walked in. Instantly D had to suppress his desire to sing "Doctor, doctor!" at him the way he did to his parrot. It was sort of like the time recently when he had listened to a very informative recorded lecture about life in Antioch in the 4th century when it was part of the Roman empire's eastern territory and numerous times he had to suppress laughter at the thought of the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, which after all was probably based on the Holy Lance of Antioch.

35

"So do you want a living will because of COVID-19?" the doctor asked. "Well, that is certainly part of it. I want it for that contingency, should it come to it, but anything like that. I want to avoid being treated medically. I know that sometimes you aren't conscious to refuse. So I want to have a kind of clear instructions available to anyone." The meeting was happening over on the long side of the room where there was a long table with a silver coffee pot on it and D and the doctor and Tim and his assistant and the woman who had come there with D were all kind of standing around, in a standoffish sort of way, and the a cart clinked by with the other assistant pushing it and then it was quiet and then the leaf blowers started going outside in the courtyard and after a while the doctor kind of nodded, and D, who was by now walking around a little in a what was either a nervous tic or a barely concealed attempt to escape the situation, finished his thought. "I want a 'just kill me' order. It should say, If I am found in your care, please, just, kill, me."

36

Now for the administrative part, 'for what it's worth Mister D__ you can present this to your HMO/PPO but they have to be able to reconcile it with the paperwork,'

as the administrative assistant types into the computer with her sloppy excessive makeup and D is just zoning out, trying not to drool over this quite sufficiently attractive woman, like the desk lady at his last W2 job a few years ago who drunkenly confessed her feelings for him right in front of her boyfriend (and they still didn't get together, no less) and somehow she is very similar and then D goes into his stupid hypothesis about a certain nonzero percentage of hot brunettes across the West looking very similar, like is that some pioneer clan gone vertical in population terms, SALLY OF THE OLD WEST hanging out in Reno and the last time we saw each other we had been like, oh, do we see each other again, but how, and now we just have files and paperwork and for whatever reason D is trying to make conversation. "Did you hear about those new computer security flaws, they are being referred to as 'heart bone' and 'bleed spur?' The first is where a HACKER (i.e. cracker) corrupts an app that has access to another app [using OAuth and that stuff] and uses that access to corrupt that account or, more often, steal its identity and then use it for some Nazi shit or something."

37

Fortune Cookie: Your dental bleeding is only transitory

The Doctor had decided to stop by the bar on the way out. "Just a quick sniff of bourbon," he mumbled as he walked in. The table in the back middle of the room had one of Tim's assistants and a prospector and a prostitute sitting there. As the Doctor walked by and sat alone a few tables away he overheard the assistant discussing the plot of Moby Dick. "See the onshore segment is non-trivial and involves a good deal of preparation but before long we are at sea, certainly, and talking a good deal about the mechanics of whaling, but the command structure of the ship forms the chess board of the plot at sea, but of course a greater plot stirs beneath--" "Did they have the ability to go up in a hot air balloon to look for where the whales were?" asked the prospector. "They--gihh--you would climb the mast if you wanted to--how would they be able to maneuver both vehicles then to.." the frustrated assistant raised his hands front-palms-up. The doctor thought about the picnic he had seen as he had walked out of the Institution through the courtyard. An old man had a basket open with crackers and cheese inside and was sipping on a lemonade and flying his small drone, 'no phone just vibing.' D wandered into the bar not long afterwards and he grabbed his beer at the bar and saw the doctor. Not really wanting to talk to him, he reasoned that the paperwork would still be going through and he needed to be courteous, DON'T MESs IT uP. "Hey, doc...ta. How're ya." The doctor answered, something something, and D zoned out and remembered that they had found a common connection to the Chicago area. D sometimes missed Chicago for an hour or so each summer but that was it; it's probably not worth visiting a place for longer than you have a passing interest in it for. Who cares.

D thought about creating a Twitter bot to live on after him and reply to every (assuredly scant) mention of him or his work with 'Who cares' every time. He thought about that old Italian restaurant on the north side where everyone in his

party had ordered with excitement, and then he was the only person who liked his dish, an orecchiette plate, and all of a sudden the place wasn't cozy it was cramped in the corner of an old hotel building and everyone was just ready to find the chef and bash him with the coffee cups of cold consolation. Little did he know what the restaurant business had coming with COVID-19, they could all tell themselves now, D imagined.

38

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One of the prospectors was talking about an ex at the table at the bar.

"Oh she was a little Ohio sweetie, but so insecure. Had a hard time deciding what she was super into--like cycling or boating or whatever. But she was passionate about her work. They got this greeting card company out there, and she loved talking about the cards she helped design. She was especially proud of a birthday audio card with silly singing, these cheap speakers with sped-up-audio, and she did a really cute impersonation of it. Itttt's yerrr berrrrthdaaayy!!"

39

The wheels were squeaking on the cart, and residents were asking questions. On the second floor, where some people are more aware than others, it was rolling along in the evening, many had been fed and there was a quiet pharmacological haze around the place and the nursing shift supervisor was greeting Tim's assistants as they wheeled the cart and tried to ask them about some more guaze for a patient on this floor with a stubborn dental issue and they seemed evasive so she got a bit interested in what all was going on there and she is standing over the assistant pulling the cart and seeming to conceal that front part and here the nurse is almost towering over him with her energy and force (despite being a few inches shorter than him) and suddenly he is yelling panicked instructions to the other assistant. "Barnabas, we NEED to GET THIS tHING to the elevator!" he yelled but before long the nurse had started to disassemble the cart and all sorts of unexpected objects like condoms and lube are flying out and before long the prostitute has panicked and tried to fight her way out of the cart and the nurse yanks a blanket away to reveal her and before long people are coming out of their rooms and the assistant administrator is rushing up the stairs to see the nurse holding the prostitute by the hair and deterring the assistants from coming closer by waving a long stick at them.

40

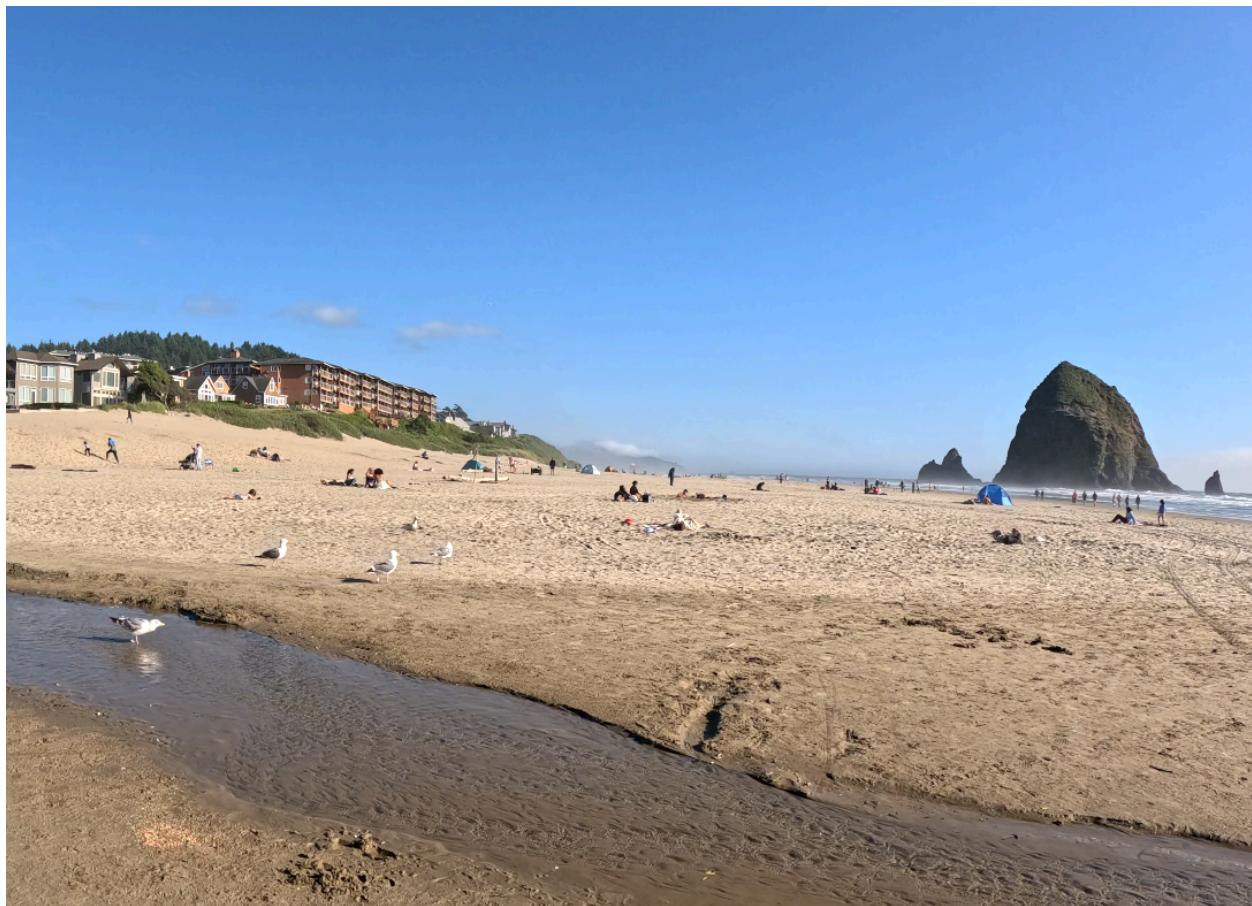
Always be ready to pack up your data and walk

Tim's assistants were having different reactions to being dismissed. Both had filed into the bar but the first one had a moony, lost look and kept looking at his hands and abrasively picking at fingers with nails and nails with fingers and nails with other nails and a prospector got pretty irritated watching that. "You're triggering me, you know!" he yelled. The other assistant was sipping his beer and had been kind of muttering quietly for quite a while but now when no one else was talking it was sort of as though his muttering for a moment WAS the conversation and he

muttered “oh hey there you-wikked-son-of-a-gun, you living that Red Dead lifestyle?” What I mean, he muttered, is that when you need to sleep you lay down next to a campfire and when you need a gun you just ride after a stagecoach with no real plan, just the raw wild desire to do a highjacking but by this point the conversation had moved on and this was just muttered after all while the prospector grabbed hold of the table’s attention. But still he muttered on, about the types of blankets you can put on horses and the dangers of mountain lions. D looked down at his phone and back up. “Really had some issues over there whuh,” he said to the assistants. “Where did Tim go off to?” “Oh they got Charlie on Tim,” one of the assistants said.

“Damn,” said D. “Fuck 12.”

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Haystack Rock, Oregon, June 2025

San Francisco speculations

Whatever that feeling is, when I catch a glimpse of the Golden Gate bridge from Lone Mountain on a day clear enough of fog to see all the way out to the Headlands, I can't capture the mix of the moment and of possibilities that it evokes—not the experience of the connected 'insider' of the Bay Area, but of an 'insider' to San Francisco's mysterious and cramped charisma, a vibe unique to this coast, however extraordinary the I-5 corridor might be from top to bottom.



The vibes had gotten heavy in the years since my partner and I packed up and left town in 2008. Tech giant success and real estate price spikes meant wealth for certain classes, but the blue collar experience of San Francisco remained difficult while the perception of lawless streets and rampant shoplifting took hold, culminating some time around the height of the pandemic.

While many areas continue to struggle (the amount of tourist shops and attractions in the Union Square

neighborhood seems dramatically down), much of the city seems to be bouncing back from its lows, for example Fisherman's Wharf is busy and seems to be expanding.

When I lived in SF in the 2000s it had an identity separate from that of Silicon Valley. While the two were seen as closely connected regions, I saw a clear difference in the culture and politics of "the city" as compared to "the valley." That distinction appeared to erode to the point of meaninglessness over the years as tech giants bussed workers in from the city and right-wing Sand Hill Road venture capital money overwhelmed San Francisco's political process while boxy modernist buildings became the norm for new construction.

But compared to how it looked when I visited in 2021, when some street-level stuff going on in the middle of the day looked pretty dicey, my trips to San Francisco this year showed a city with

a calmer, friendlier, safer-seeming vibe. A recent change in some of the streets of Golden Gate Park means that John F. Kennedy Drive [is now a pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare](#), so the northeast corner of the park is now its own mini-park, in car terms. Which is just another example of how San Francisco will keep changing, and just as the Sutro Baths will stay abandoned, they offer warning that the SalesForce Tower will be abandoned too someday.

