

A Tao of Transformation



By Kevin Soini

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(and malcontents)

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| The Tao and Why: Artist's Statement |

It's like this: write countless drafts of how you'll be remembered. Save them or release them to digital oblivion. Realize how vapid your writing is in comparison to other's. Wish you had more time to finish. Know it's pointless to wish. Try to center yourself on your own. Realize you're going to have to pick one of these scrappy ideas and stick with it. Do so. Consider how it'll look in comics. Consider the daunting task ahead of you of having to draw it all out, old school. Suddenly abandon the idea of drawing a comic, which you were intent on for so long, because it's just not happening. Be sad about that, but only for a moment. Consider the strangeness of the command form. Abruptly segue out of it and back into the personal narrative.

I'm learning how to write the way I drive my car, you know? I don't have to think too much about shifting or responding to traffic. I ease the shifter into the appropriate gear for each situation, predict what people around me will do, and allow them to do it, without reacting. I just respond to the conditions around me and go with the flow. Typically, I know where I'm going in the car: where I want to go, at least. But I don't think about that too much. I also can't predict the road ahead. I just ride it. In writing, I don't need a road map. I don't typically know where I'm going, but I find out when I get there. The gears are tense and viewpoint. The road is the story itself. Traffic comes in form of thoughts, that you simply weave through. Woah! A metaphor! We could get lost in this labyrinth. Let's take this next exit.

Back to going with the flow, that idea has been expounded on by bike messengers, particularly in New York City. They call traffic and their fluid movement with it "The Flow." I use that term to describe the source of creativity and writing. When I try to draw writing from intellect, as with those analytical essays they make us write here, that's

not Flow. Flow comes from the heart, but can be hard to connect with. That's the whole battle right now- connecting with The Flow. It's mostly contrary to what we're taught in school all our lives, so it takes time to get. College actually impedes that process in some ways. On the other hand, it's helped me organize my thoughts, and has given me a bunch of conventions and writing tools that allow my work to be a little more accessible. Beforehand, my writing was all over the place and way more tangential than it is now: still quite a bit so. But there's a balance between Flow and intellect. I'll find it one day.

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As far as my life goes, it's way too late for me to stop being transcendental. The point of no return has come a long time ago. I'm already so far down the rabbit hole that there's no escaping, and no desire to escape. The thing is that The Flow is bigger than a source of creativity. It's connected to the cyclists' version of The Flow. It's connected with everything. And when you start to mess around with it, it takes over and becomes a way of life. When you let go of trying to control and understand everything going on, as you might through meditation and conscious awareness- mindfulness practice as the Buddhists call it- then it's like the entire universe pours out of you. Or so I hear. That's been the path I've been on for pretty much my whole life, particularly the last few years.

The main task in following the path is to be present in each moment, realizing there is no time but right now. The past, the future: they don't exist. What's relevant to you is what's right around you. The rest? Out of sight, out of mind. As far as you know, it doesn't exist. It takes some time to do this. You meditate, you read, you watch videos from masters like Adyashanti or Mooji. And you start to awaken to the reality in which you exist, who you really are, how you are not your mind or its thoughts, nor your body or its actions.

The journey changes you. The better part of my sense of humor is lost for good. But in its place is a more cosmic style of folly: a sense

of the absurdity of all existence. This is the blight of they that walk the transcendental path. A blessing in the guise of a curse. One door shut and another opened.

The film "Matrix" puts it well. The protagonist starts out as Thomas A. Anderson, a cog in the machine of gray cubicles. He transforms into Neo, a codename he devises for himself as a hacker. Neo happens to be an anagram for "one" as in The One. The One of which we are all a part, and which is the essence of us. As such, we go into this joint identity shared by the universe as a whole. Intense? Yes. But profoundly simple. It's not a concept you can wrap your head around; it's something you have to experience for yourself. For said reasons I have little to say about my Thomas Anderson character. Though it really matters little, and I don't want you to focus on that story, I will summarize for the sake of posterity.

The person I've been for most of my life was a total dweeb, always feeling miserably adrift and lonely. His whole life hinged on what he felt others thought about him, except for his clothes, mainly nerdy khakis and button-down shirts. If you haven't guessed, he has a transportation background, read: he drove buses and cars for a living. In truth, he was just a character, a role I played. I retain that aspect of getting people somewhere different than where they started from. But he was a bookworm, which is where I inherited his interest in the written word. At this time in my life I care little for reading books anymore. With the advancement of the motion picture it's starting to feel like a dying medium at times. More importantly, I know I can't find any of the answers anywhere outside of myself. The answers need to come from within. Not to mention the fact that college can make you tired of reading.

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In the way of the cosmic dance, it was one door closing and another opening that found me at UMF. Laid off in Seattle with a cinched-up job market, I began seeking other places to finish my

degree and the progress I'd been making toward it at Seattle Central Community College. Meanwhile, I'd discovered that I can channel writing. In the proper mood, usually vexed with an empty stomach, the words would pour out of me. The new life chapter came together as new chapters do. The gate came down and swept the pins away, resetting the lane for another chance to bowl a spare. Everything fell into place, like you wouldn't believe. In simple terms, it was serendipitous for me to be here. How it happens, though, is never the point. There are no mistakes. Every moment, you're exactly where you need to be.

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It's like this: Realize nobody has any answers. Only questions. That anybody with answers is just a fraud. Let go of your writing and stop trying to make it do too much, like carry heavy messages or sound infinitely wise, when you are not. Stop trying to channel The Flow. Realize it is with you always, helping you write anything that you manage. Stop trying to keep your writing from being "too square" or "too conversational:" too left-lobe, or too right lobe. Push that cursor through as if riding a brakeless bicycle through Manhattan, 3 deliveries in your bag, and plenty more waiting at the office. Whip around cabs and buses. Grab onto them for a free ride. Stand on your pedals. Zig-zag across intersections, go against the stop lights, keep an out in mind that'll let you get away from bike cops. Go with The Flow. This is life.

| **Current** |

This city
is living,
breathing,
ever in motion,
like the waters from which it rises.

Sea-salt, oily diesel,
and putrid fish stink ride the air,
with the shrieking seagulls.

While the Bourdaine strata
sits in upscale bistros,
marveling at how the food is
“much much better than it needs to be,”
the Cobain strata lines up at the Mission
for some bread and soup,
perhaps a bit of mac and cheese.

In your neighborhood,
the deafening horns of freight trains
blast upwind,
and the rhythmic drawl of
mariachi music,
drifts easily on the the breeze,
to the bus stop where you stand,
in front of your apartment.

The exposed electric line
zaps with sulfurous sparks you can taste
in the rain,
when the poles of the 36 bus swipe
against it in zinging symphony.

That trackless trolley,
smelling of electric current and ocean air,
carries you through the International District,
where ideas are thrown in twangy Vietnamese,
and clipped Mandarin and the apothecaries sell
strong-flavored but soothing licorice-root slices.

Downtown the street people gather
in swarms catching up,
“what's good”
“long time, brother”
And sell freely gained bus tickets
for only a buck.

Anxious and tired masses
board buses for all points or hurry
into the depths of the tunnel station,
for light rail and further buses.

You wander up Pine street,
past the ironic Hard Rock Café,
past the market,
past the original Starbucks and
the cheese shop filled with tourists.

From the terraced Belltown park
with the giant totem,
you catch the golden glint of
sun on sound,
that gave the prospectors hope,
as they camped in this dirty town,
built on landfill, on brothels, and on dreams,
on their way to try their luck in Alaska.

In this sleepless city,
where the mist fills the streets
night after night,
your clothes always seem damp,
and you're lucky if your shoes keep
your socks from sopping,
but little notice if they don't.

This is the city that made an
East-coast ghost out of you,
to groove Pacific all the way.

When you leave,
a part of this city will remain in you,
and a part of you will remain in this city.

| **Interview with Donovan Parks** | *Fiction*

Parks, the star of my upcoming novel “Learning to Breathe,” speaks here about his life before his spiritual transcendence.

My whole game is turning somebody else’s evil back on themselves. So if I spotted any kind of bad vibes, I went in for it. In a way, ain’t that the very definition of a saint?

At first there were three of them. I came up with a lot more after that. They’d call or text my new phone, asking for Brian. It didn’t take me long to figure out their deal. “This is his boy. What you lookin’ for?” And so, I found out three things I needed to conjure up within twenty-four hours, if I wanted to make a quick buck. And of course, I did want to make a quick buck. One of the things I already had. Cannabis: a half ounce. I had a lot more than that: about a pound of Afghan Kush. I took a couple buds, guessed the weight, and put them into a baggie from the kitchen. The other stuff I had to look up, because it was all hardcore street slang, and I don’t mess with any of the harder stuff myself. I figured the “v” one dude wanted was a Valium, but other than that, I wasn’t sure, and had to double check. While I was thinking about it, I called the weed girl, who sounded like a young, sexy co-ed, and arranged a meeting shortly after, near the Beri Uquam train stop. I put the baggy in my coat, and went out on my way. Half an hour later, after a quick exchange with a nervous young girl, eyes as big as plates, I was eighty bucks richer. I would’ve tried flirting with her, maybe suggesting “there’s more where that came from,” but she was too scared of me. After all, I’d become a dealer, so I couldn’t blame her. “Holla if you need anything,” I said to her rapidly disappearing back. “Okay. Thanks,” she said nervously over her shoulder.

The second ones were a little harder, but I’ve talked it up with a lot of the cabbies in this town, and most of them are my dawgs now. So, I asked around, and found out who had what I needed, and how much it costs on the street. Of course I double-checked with a few, so they wouldn’t try to gyp me. Whatever this shit was, one thing was worth \$175, so that’d net me half, and another was worth \$80, so I’d get forty. Better than nothing, for doing nothing. Knowing time was of the essence for these junkies,

I called them back a few hours later than they first called. A little while later, I had two addresses, and arrangements scheduled. Meanwhile, a couple of my boys, who had what my buyers needed, were standing by. I called 'em both up, made sure to give the right details for each of 'em, and the next day, both stopped by for a beer, and dropped the cash. So that's how it started. Nobody screwed anybody; just a little networking. Something I was cut out for, and knew how to do. The addicts had their drugs, and me and my boys had the cash. All it took was getting a new prepaid mobile phone, which I was originally going to use to try and find a legit job. But, with money like this coming in, who would want to work some bullshit nine to five? This is how a player works: by being open to opportunity. And I just got lucky, and broke into the business by chance. I stopped caring, and started partying, doing whatever I wanted. Sleeping in, sleeping with all kinds of chicks, hustling, going to bars, whatever.

What I didn't know, is how it wears on you after a while. You start to get people who want to knock your teeth in, because the shit you sold them, often without it ever touching your hands, was bunk. You start to realize how people that are hooked on something, are dying, killing themselves, and you're killing them in order to live. Plus, I didn't want nothin' to do with those demons and bad vibes. I felt some nasty stuff around me. Not to mention, I didn't need the chance of getting a record. I may be a conman, but I'm not a criminal. So, I realized I couldn't be dealing for too long. Maybe a little bit of my weed on occasion, if I needed the coin. Maybe even some shrooms, or something like that. All natural, gets you high, doesn't kill you. But all the hard stuff, I'd stop.

I decided that if I start selling fake shit, nobody gets hurt, and they can't do shit about it, and will probably never see me again. And what're they gonna do? Call customer service? Call the popo? They're stuck, and out of luck. Maybe they would rob a convenience store, but that wasn't exactly my problem. If they were of the mind, they'd do that anyway. Probably did it in the first place, if they're hard up like that. Plus, I'm a little bit selfish besides. I don't really think ahead of time about how such and such will affect other people. If I did, I wouldn't have survived like I do. I ain't no saint— just a lowlife thug, who's gotta do what a thug's gotta do.

So, I started passing off different powders and pills, and stuff, when I figured out how to find look-alikes. Valium might be an ibuprofen chiseled down; stuff like that. And I had no problem with it. For all I knew, I was helping people quit their habit. I had to be real careful, because I knew I could get my ass beat or worse, real easy, so I targeted young college kids that were probably getting into shit for the first time, just to see what it was like. But I knew I could get a bad rap for passing off counterfeits without the high, so I worked all different areas, some out of Montreal completely, and worked other scams, too. Whatever I could think of. Like I said, I'm an opportunist. Stories, con-games, the old kiddy shit like 3 card monty. Whatever. If I spotted someone with too much cash, I had a plan to relieve them of at least some of it. My only boundary was I didn't mess anyone up, rob 'em, or do anything to them that they didn't do to themselves. And I never bothered the working person. It's just not my thing. All I do is turn people's even on themselves so it goes full circle, and eventually short-circuits as it inventively does. I just coax the process along, is all.

The vortex only opens only once a year. If you have your timing exactly right and— you'd better be pretty damned precise, you will find your bearings in the wind, and will set up camp at just the appropriate place and time. Crater Lake is the only place I've heard of doing this. It's been attempted in other vortex sites like Sedona, but without any degree of success that I know of.

When you do this, you have to be sure you want to do it, obviously! Because if you do it right, you never come back. God bless ya and— bam! You're gone. Through the composition of time, and the universe itself, and back to the Core. Who knows what happens then. I'm not one to speculate. I don't care for such notions. Something happens. Probably something really cool, we're betting. But if not, oh well. What can you do. Sooner or later it'd be inevitable, right?

The first thing you gotta do is make sure the moon's right. You get out there, and you sense the vibes. You feel it out. You ground yourself in the sand or soil of that place until you feel something. And that will be a “yes,” or a “no.” When you have that, you can do anything. The world is at your fingertips, as they say. If there isn't relief from that, I don't know what there could possibly be relief from in or outside of this world. You probably will have to do something crazy and dumb, like wake up at 4:30, check the orientation of the moon, and leave your cabin or tent to sit in the tranquil dark of the forest edge. I'm not saying you'll have to. No one really knows how this works. They just know it does.

A friend of a friend lost somebody in there about a year and a half ago. They claim to have full video documentation, but are to distraught at the moment to bring it out. Why? I'm not sure. They must not know the difference between 'Neato,' and 'not so good.' Why would they ever think this was the latter? This is like bliss times infinity. The greatest drug-orgasm you have ever experienced. With no drugs. So basically, the dude was camped out in this tent— an orange dome is what I imagine when I tell this story, so it probably was— it's in the universal memory for any who would wish to access it. But he comes out here, and he stakes his tent, and he puts the camera on a tripod. He speaks into it, a buttery little spiel for the world about what he's undertaking, and why. At this point, he's been fasting for a while. Two solid days, at least, or so I'd imagine. He says gives his goodbyes to the camera, turns it off, purifies himself with burning sage, and beds down for the night, zipping up his front door, climbing into the bag, and sacking out almost right away.

He awakens on his own, he says, comes out of the tent, turns on the camera at 4:02 AM, does his morning ritual, smudges himself again, and sings “Hare Krishna,” 'til he's blue in the face. And then it happens. At 4:13:15, the guy is on film, standing in front of the tent, chanting softly. Half a second later, the tent is standing there, but no guy. Vanished without a trace. No clothing left outside, because I imagine he wasn't wearing any. They found what is apt to have been the only outfit he brought, inside

the tent. At this point, I'll stand to bet that the camera recorded only a blip of static before resuming to the tent. Of course no one would believe the video anyway. Why would they? Unless they just know. Unless they can feel it. They're not gonna' give a shit about a stupid video like that. "The guy walked out of the frame. They edited him out." Blah blah blah. Whatever you want to believe.

Me, I kept it simple: rented a cabin, got a ride down here, being careful to pay all of my dues for the rental upfront. I didn't bring anything with me, other than this notebook and this pen, so you won't have to worry about a damn thing, except maybe discarding my clothes which is just a pair of dungarees, a flannel shirt, a pair of foot gloves, and some undies. I've taken the liberty of tying them all up neatly in a plastic bag, so if you're the management you can kindly toss it in a donation bin. Sorry about leaving that for you, I just couldn't think of any way around that.

You can rationalize this any way you need to, but that won't change what it is. If you think this is suicide you're nuts. People that know me- very few people I might add- know I'm addicted to life. I've got plenty of money in the bank. And I'm entirely free. Some say the vortex is the entrance to a wormhole, or another dimension. I don't have a goddamn clue any more than you do. At least not yet. But I'm dyin' to find out. Easy, there. That was just a pun. Ha ha. If you find this, the mission was successful. Some chance that would be, that for once in my life my math is on the money. I love everybody and everything, and wish you wisdom and happiness. And don't you dare mourn for me! That would be selfish. As I mentioned, I'm not dead. But I won't be back. Not in the flesh anyway, and I doubt in spirit, either. So long. It's been swell.

Simon L. Feather-Foot
9:13 PM PDT, 8/11/2012
Crater Lake, OR

| **Detritivore** | *Fiction*

Never had I suffered so much in the sweltering beam of the lime light as I did that night in the overflowing conference room at Harrah's. Thousands of eyes pierced my face, seeking hope: my biggest audience yet. People were coming out from under every rock in a last effort attempt to move ahead in the world. Drenched with sweat in the poorly ventilated, stuffy room, heated with the warmth of humanity, the burn of desire, I fed the audience my copious lies.

Meanwhile tiny, living fighter jets relentlessly bombarded me with air raids. Flies were everywhere. All around me, and seeming to target me alone. They were on my water glass, the podium I occasionally leaned on for a moment's rest, my linen suit collar, everywhere. Unable to discern if I was imagining it all, I continued to move back and forth across the stage, appealing to the masses with my song and dance. My chest tightened as I sensed the toughness of the crowd. They weren't buying it like the typical desperate throngs I sold dreams to. Yet, there was nothing to it but to keep pushing on. "That's just the feel of this town: tough." I told myself.

Each of my words was weighed down by a thousand shuffling wings, a hundred stifled coughs, the dull roar of an ineffective HVAC system at work somewhere above. Feeling every second, I was forced into drinking more water than usual, something I usually try to avoid as it implies nervousness, and a nervous speaker never sells. But if I didn't keep gulping down the hotel's dirty ice water, the stickiness in my throat would've caused my tongue to click audibly at the roof of my mouth every time I swallowed. I looked out at the sea of people, dressed through the range of business casual to professional, a few Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts thrown

in. This was Vegas, after all.

I started to get reach the end of my spiel. “There has never been a better time to join the Nutritech family. Every one of you here has bills and obligations. True? You owe it to yourself and your loved ones to reach as high as you can in life! Am I right?” The response was not the energetic roar of applause I was used to. I kept going anyway, tripping over my lines, getting my timing all askew, trying to be discreet in swatting flies with the back of my hand, as if wiping perspiration away.

“Folks, I'm going to be real: you may never again be offered the lucrative opportunity before you today. The solid reputation which has transformed Nutritech from a kitchen table startup to a Fortune 500 company in just three years, causes us to be inundated with applications for independent distributorships. To be quite frank with you, we're running out of territories. What does this mean? Simply put, this means the opportunity to distribute this amazing product line may soon be gone. Forever.” A thousand doubtful grunts, and the flies made their touch and goes in my professionally coiffed mane.

I allowed my drying tongue to click against my gum line as I readied myself to deliver the punchline to my big farcical joke. I let it out for the last time, paced, as suave as I could manage with the froggy croak beginning to overtake me. “You know, folks, because you've been in this room with me for so long, I'm starting to feel like you're family. I really mean that.” I walked to the center of the stage, put my left hand on the podium and leaned forward so I could deliver the final words into the faces before me. “Because I want to see you succeed so badly, as I would my own, I'm going to let you have your distributorship: are you ready for this? For

thirty-five percent off the startup fee!!” I assumed the lectern fully, looked straight forward into the light and waited. The applause slowly began and I took this as my cue. The regional manager came up to relieve me, taking over with admonishments and instructions. “How 'bout that everybody? Is that a deal or what,” he asked as I switched off my cordless and quickly made my way off stage and out the side door of the makeshift auditorium.

In the dimly lit hallway, Jason Krauss, the VP of sales met me as usual, but he didn't give me the usual laughing high five. Instead he barked “what the fuck was that, Logan? Your biggest audience yet and you bombed. Completely. We're not gonna make a cent.

“Hey, whatdya want from me,” I asked, removing the wire from my tie and the unit to which it was attached from my belt, handing it off to the assistant, then stripping off the tie with one hand and shoving it into the inner pocket of my suit. “You put me in a room, ninety degrees, infested with bugs, people...filthy, musty muggy...you're not going to get the usual quota. You're still going to make a killing. Did you see how they went for the special? They ate it up. If anything, you owe me double for this oversized crowd of hard cases!”

You're lucky to get half!”

With that he slipped a folded wad into my hand. It felt lighter than usual. He was really doing it to me: passing off a grand instead of my usual two.

“Whatever. I'm not going to get bent out of shape about it. But just you remember this next time you need me, Jay. I'm going to Legal Plan, USA. You'll never see me again!” I stormed out, letting him throw his obscenities weakly in my wake, unheard.

I needed to be at a bar quick. With my security escort, Shane huffing to keep up, I hauled ass to the garage and jumped into a cab. Shane jumped after me, winded enough to make me wonder about his usefulness. The driver was tan and non-chalant. He chewed his gum a few times, sizing me up, than asked into the mirror “Where you off to, boss?” I sighed. I hadn't thought this far ahead yet. “Take me to the other end of the strip.” I thought for a second, jogging my limited memory of tourist trips gone by. “Eiffel tower,” I said.

“You mean The Paris. No problem, buddy.” the driver confirmed. He tried to make small talk on the way but quickly shut up when he realized I wasn't into it. The bugs plagued me the whole time, non-stop. Pretty soon we rolled up by the cheesy replica landmarks. I paid the cabby too much, and stepped out into the hot tropical rain with Shane close on my heels.

I turned around.

“Let me ask you something,” I said to him.

“Shoot.”

“Do...Fuck. Do I have a bunch of flies all around me?”

“As a matter of fact...I wasn't gonna say anything, boss, but yeah. They seem to like you.”

“Shit,” I said, making for the entrance.

“Come on,” I said, waving him in.

That the houseflies were not a weird desert mirage was a secret relief. I wasn't ready to for a bad trip, hallucinating a personal cloud of pestilence while I was out on the job. That's one

thing I wouldn't have been able to handle, although the fact that I was surrounded by a real swarm of insects, visible to other people wasn't of much comfort either.

I could only hope relief would await at my dark-wood oasis. I hustled to the nearest filling station and sunk down on one of the tall chairs. The foxy, green-eyed blond tending the bar, came before me silently, and looked into my eyes. The neckline of her dress dove down just far enough to entice, without revealing. She didn't need to say anything. "Captain-Coke," I said in the strong vibrato which assured my drink order would always be understood over the loudest rock bands. She nodded, flung out a napkin, and disappeared. The flies did not. I didn't catch a moment's peace from them. All the more reason why I needed the rum so bad. I'd take it down so fast, none of those little fuckers could get a taste first.

After I took down three rounds this way, the bar girl came to me with my fourth and said:

"Do you know why they're here?"

"Excuse me?"

"The flies. Do you know why they're around you?"

"I don't know. It's muggy out? They like my cologne? Why is it any concern of yours?"

"You're not much into symbolism, are you? Do you see them around anyone else? No. Only you. Because they *represent* you. Don't you get it? You're a fly-man. You *are* a fly. You must be quite the asshole. Which is not altogether inconsistent with my observations."

She snorted to herself through her nose, and went away. I looked down at my drink. They'd already gotten to it. They were swarming all over the rim of the glass, the ice, the lime, the useless little straws. I felt the heat rising in me. Right then, with no notice and no way of

controlling it, I puked all over the bar.

The truth was, images were flashing through my mind. The waitress I'd treated like a dirty whore the previous night. The way I'd been my entire life. My job, a fake motivational coach, selling an unattainable dream, which I meanwhile lived.

The next thing I knew, huge arms were clutching me from behind.

"Let's go, chief," came a voice.

In a second, I was crouching on the curb vomiting my guts out. A blurred face stood above me, a huge bouncer in a black polo uniform.

"Don't ever come back. You're banned from this joint," he blasted, and stepped away. A bunch of other people stopped to stare down at me or rushed briskly past, cussing me out.

"Shane, *what the fuck*," I demanded of the sidewalk. I glanced over my shoulder.

"You just let this guy throw me out on my ass like this?"

"Sorry, boss," he said. "It's his territory. Nothing I could do. Plus I don't care for *flies*." Just like that, he walked off into the rain, leaving me to my miserable retching.

When I was done emptying the contents of my stomach on the cement, I lifted slowly to my feet. I felt curiously relaxed, as if I'd relieved myself of a great weight with the puke. Miraculously, I noticed the swarm of shit eaters went away from my face and into the pile of nastiness I'd left behind. I felt happy. Liberated. Being a man of my word, I'd freed myself permanently from the parasitic organization in which I'd for so long been a major parasite. I began to dance a little giddily. People around me must've taken me for a drunk or a big winner,

but the surge of euphoria was all from within.

I took my thousand-dollar gold cufflinks from the ends of my sleeves and dropped them in a stunned pan-handler's cup. In that act, I felt further freedom. The slow deterioration of my Hong-Kong tailored suit into a squishy pulp felt good, as if an unpleasant costume were being stripped from me. The words of the real coaches I'd studied came to me as I walked, as did an endless slide show sequence of bad things I'd done to people all my life. Using people, treating them like shit, letting my ego control me, acting like a total child.

It was a bittersweet catharsis with nightmarish images I couldn't believe were actual recollections, mixed in with various self-help propaganda. "You will always succeed in life as long as you genuinely care about people," a voice from an old CD floated into my mind. I remembered the rage I threw in my room when I found out my twelfth birthday gifts didn't include the dirt bike I wanted. I thought of how I'd refused to visit my mother on her death bed, and how I'd missed the funeral, getting high on speed for two days straight. I recollected scene after scene of drunken debauchery at the frat house.

I remembered the day I dropped out of college because my record was shot and there was no point in staying. How I went to Toastmaster's meetings, and how they taught me how to address a crowd, hoping I'd use the skills at a non-profit or to become some kind of leader, but how I'd found out about Nutritech instead. How I got launched in a matter of weeks by deceiving all my friends into quitting their jobs, thinking they could make a living selling powders and pills. How I moved up the ladder fast because they liked my gift of gab and I discovered quickly how easy it was to fool a group of people into believing they could become overnight successes

by pushing the same shoddy, gimmicky supplements.

In between the images, I heard the lectures and phrases that inflated my head, but were intended for more positive use.

“Fake it til' you make it.”

“If you learn to listen and make everyone in a room feel uniquely special, you will always be well-liked and prosperous.”

The ghosts of countless personal development CDs and past experiences came forward one by one like this, as I walked along the strip in that hot desert rain. On the one hand I was red with shame at being such a bad person, seeing how it was that I became such a lecherous, fraudulent fuck up. On the other, I was freed from that life: the old me.

When I got to the Bellagio where my comped suite awaited, I knew something was up, right away. One glance at the government SUVs sitting in the streets with total disregard for traffic, strobes flashing, and I knew the day had come. Of course it would, eventually. Nutritech had consistently conned enough cash from the people that it was only a matter of time before the whole sham came tumbling down. With the styling washed out of my hair and my suit melted into wet rags, I looked like any bum on the street, and as long as I kept away from the hotel, no one had any reason to link me to the sharky vitamin cartel. I slipped by as a huge guy in a blue windbreaker labeled “FBI” in yellow lettering marched out of the elevated lobby with a bunch of tagged evidence, including a bunch of our bags and my little silver Samsonite computer case with the Playboy bunny sticker I'd decorated it with to find it easily. I knew I wouldn't miss it. I

also knew I had to hit the road. Sparing no time to linger, I turned the corner, and went up to the first van in the cabstand. Half a minute later I was hightailing it to the airport.

--Five Months Later--

The flies are around me constantly now, but I've gotten used to it. When you haul garbage for a living, bugs and stink are going to follow you. There's no getting around it. Clinging on the back of a trash truck tossing around bags of filthy garbage doesn't pay in a month what I made in one night, before, in a life of good times and idle luxury. But it's an honest living and it keeps me in shape. Besides, I'm the life of the party with the crew. We go bowling once a week. They like me because I listen and I don't talk much or volunteer advice. I've already helped Tito to save his marriage, and Barry seems to be building a little more self-confidence. I've taught these men that just because we pick up trash doesn't mean we're garbage ourselves, or that our lives should be thrown away like so much discarded filth in a dump.

The courts froze all my bank accounts in the investigation. I'll never see the money, my bachelor pad in Miami, or any of my imported cars again, and I don't care. It's not like I got much time to play with that stuff anyway, or ever got much out of such play. Junk like that isn't what's important. It's all about being real and treating people decently. It took me a while, but I see that now. Living a life of ease on the backs of the masses never has given me any of the satisfaction that I get from feeling useful.

Since they can't prove I've done any wrong, and I've told them what they wanted to know, they're leaving me out of the case. I was never really in on the big heist. For all I knew, they had some decent products and people could make money selling them. It wasn't my fault that all the stuff turned out to be bogus and full of toxic shit. I see a lot of it in the trash cans these days, discarded like so many broken dreams. I'd never known before how shitty it was, or how people were forced by contract to stock up on loads of it bigger than they could ever dream of getting rid of. But that's not my world anymore. In my new circle, you do a day's work for a day's pay. What more does anyone really need?

| **Therapy Practice** | *Fiction of surprisingly mediocre quality*

On a Wednesday afternoon like any other, Stephen was seated in his tiny Downtown Asheville office. His last client of the day, Patrick Jones slumped in— a troubled teen but no more troubled than any of Stephen's clients, or than Stephen himself had been, for that matter.

“So, Patrick. How've your last couple weeks been?,” Stephen started in.

“Total bullshit. I had an episode.”

“Really? Tell me about that.”

“It was real bad. Alls that happened was some fuck head cut me in line in the cafeteria and I couldn't help myself. The next thing you know, I was giving him a pounding. He was only a weak little shit but I gave him a bloody nose and knocked him out. Actually, I got suspended for that. The kid had to go to the hospital.”

“Really. And I only hear about this now!?”

“It's not like an emergency or anything. Right? I mean what do you want me to do?”

A rage came over Stephen. His voice grew loud and he raised to his feet, standing over Patrick.

“Well...when something like this happens and you have a court-appointed therapist, it's actually the law that you advise either me or somebody from the court...in any case, what really gets to me is your unwillingness to change. You don't *want* to change! You don't *want* to get better. At least when I was growing up in foster homes, and got into trouble, I wanted to do something about it.” Stephen couldn't help himself— his composure fell away. Reddened and seeing red, he smashed his fist on his desk.

“As a matter of fact...get out of my office! Get out. I don't need you here right now.”

“You don't have to tell me twice, I'm out. You're a fuckin' psycho, dude!” the teen said, leaving the sparse, tiny office.

After Stephen heard him walking down the stairs he stood up and yelled at his reflection in the glass enclosing his degree: “Fuck you, Stephen! You fuck face. You lost a client, you dumb shit!!”

Stephen slumped out of the cement-block building to his old gray Civic. He sat down inside and allowed the automatic safety belt to slowly enclose him as he closed the creaky door. He'd often relived the day in 1990 following his graduation from Springfield State, when, with a job letter from a high school guidance department, and a five-hundred dollar down payment, he'd driven it off the lot. “It'll be the best purchase you ever make,” the salesman had said. He hadn't been far off. The box-shaped automobile had gleamed Harvard crimson in the sun. It was equipped with a moon-roof and power windows. Luxury for a person of his standing at the time.

Honda was offering special financing incentives to clear its lots for its spiced-up new models. Considering grad school at Harvard, Stephen couldn't resist the temptation. The car very quickly turned into the average social worker's beater, but it still held a special place in his heart, having taken him nearly four-hundred thousand miles. He drove aimlessly, letting the safety of the car comfort him, a symbol of his hard work to rise from poverty and the foster system. His favorite heavy metal CD pounded in the car's subwoofers.

“You get me away from it all,” he said to the car. “When there's nothing in the world but bitterness, you make me feel like I can leave it all behind. Social work. Failed relationships. All of it. He was near tears, but the tears didn't come. He'd long forgotten how to cry.

A letter came in the mail for Stephen several days later, from the state licensing board. It began:

“Mr. Stephen Samson,

A client in your care has filed a petition with our office, in which you have been implicated for

violation of the code of ethics for your profession. We have scheduled an administrative hearing at the licensing bureau, for the date and time listed below.”

“Fuck!” said Stephen, lying in the vinyl orange couch in his living room.

“They're going to yank my license! For what? Showing my feelings?”

The letter continued: “Until you have appeared at that time, you must not practice social work. The names of some counselors in your vicinity, to which you may refer your cases during the interim, are provided below.”

Not too long after, Stephen found himself standing in front of the board that had certified him a number of years ago, in a Charlotte government building. He watched the white-haired, bespectacled board chairman pronounce his fate.

“After careful review of your file, Mr. Sampson, we have decided we have no choice but to suspend your license to practice social work in the state of North Carolina. You have received numerous complaints against you in the past year. Your constituted verbal assault of a minor having bipolar depression is a liability we cannot assume. It is clear to us that you are in burned out condition, Mr. Sampson. You clearly have some difficulties to deal with in your personal life.” Stephen sighed.

“Your suspension, as of today will span one-hundred and eighty days, during which time you will be expected to receive personal counseling. If you elect not to attend counseling, it could become court ordered. As you have accepted the allegations against you, you do not have the right to appeal. Following this period your case will be up for review. If we fail to see any progress in our assessment at that time, we may either rule for a revocation, or could increase the suspension period. If on the other hand, you show significant emotional recovery, you could be conditionally reinstated. We will provide you with a list of psychiatrists and psychologists qualified to offer the appropriate counseling. Do you have any closing remarks to add?”

“No, sir.” Stephen said quietly.

“In that case, sir, I wish you well in your recovery.” The chairman removed his glasses and looked Stephen in the eyes. “Do get well, Mr. Sampson, do you hear? We want you to get better.”

Days went by. Having vacated his office, with no reason to keep paying the rent on it, Stephen emptied the three bottles on his silver wire wine rack, and the two tall bottles of imported beer in his refrigerator. Occasionally he poured himself a drink some of his good Bourbon or tequila. He slowly whittled away at his supply of canned and frozen food, spending a great deal of time lying on the couch, barely watching movies. Finally, he decided to move forward with his responsibilities, and looked for a counselor from the list the board had given him. An interesting name stood out at him: “Wilfred E. Nixon, M.D. 14 Powder House Circle, Asheville, N.C.” Because the doctor was local, Stephen called the number and left a voice mail for an appointment.

Before long, Stephen found himself in an office very similar to his old one, shortly after he moved out of it.

“Mr. Samson,” the doctor began in a manner not unlike what Stephen may have selected for a session. “May I call you Steve?”

“I prefer Stephen.”

“Okay, Stephen. I'm Dr. Nixon (no relation,) but you can of course call me Fred, that'd be fine. I understand you're going through a tough time.”

“Yeah. Look, no offense to you, Fred, but I'm familiar with introspection and analysis. On top of that, you're patronizing me. Bad thing to do right out of the gate, don't you think? I'm an intelligent

person. My IQ is above average, I got good grades all the way through grad school. The only thing you have on me is a few years of training and interning, possibly even extensive experience *in medicine*. But that's not the same as therapy. That's *medicine*. So why don't you whip out your little pad, and write me a prescription for cetalopram instead of playing Freud?"

"We seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot, Mr. Samson. Now, I'm willing to work with you. I've seen all kinds of cases, in my *twenty-nine years* in the business, for what it's worth. I've had my burnout, believe me, which is among my greatest qualifiers to be of help to you. I only work with other mental health professionals now. I'm a therapist's therapist. I understand burnout. I've seen people react as you're reacting and quite a bit worse, never mind being therapeutically trained. So allow the anger. Don't judge it, let it out. You're doing great."

"I....well....," Stephen choked, his eyes tearing.

"Go ahead. You what, Stephen?"

The tears in Stephen's eyes began to flood out like waterworks. Doctor Samson non-judgmentally pushed the tissue box closer to Stephen across the coffee table between them. So they two therapists sat for a little while, Stephen in his throes, the doctor watching intently. Stephen didn't make for a tissue or move at all, except to wipe the tears away from his face with a hand. Eventually the sobs subsided and Stephen sniffed in oxygen.

"First time crying in a while?"

Stephen nodded.

"Welcome back to the freedom to emote. As you had when you were a child. But presumably lost when you were around thirteen and started to see yourself a man. Am I right?"

Stephen nodded again, his eyes clenched, chin still quivering.

"By the way, I think what you might have mistaken for a patronizing tone is actually genuine empathy. And mind you, many of my clients have educations and backgrounds very similar to my own.

I wouldn't doubt if your intelligence quotient were greater than my own. But it's difficult to allow yourself to be a client again after many years of learning and psychotherapy, followed by years of practice is it not?"

Stephen's tears started to change from tears of anger and sadness to tears of overwhelmed awe. His rational, analytical mind was forced to process the thesis presented and found it true. His eyes began to dry as he brought himself back to rationality.

"I went through the same stuff, back in eighty-seven. See, I did my M.D in the service. But I had a lot of anger— a lot of trauma, coming back from Vietnam. And it surfaced one day not too far into my civilian career. But I had a good analyst. His name was Rafael Esperenzo. Very smart guy. Helped me out. Anyhow, back to you. What was that cry about?"

"Just what you said. I...feel so vulnerable...here."

"Of course you do! Of course, of course. You can imagine I did too, a psychiatrist who'd been in charge of a whole mental health ward in a hospital, sitting in front of a man with half my education. But it turned out, double my intelligence at the time. He was just the voice of reason, steering me out of mental stalemate. As I hope to be now for you. If you'll allow me to be."

"It seems that's what you are," said Stephen.

"It's easy in mental health to get smug and say 'I don't have anymore problems, I've done my time on the couch, gone through graduate school, and started helping other people figure things out.' But damnation, we're human beings. And judging by your story, which seems to be a lot like mine, I think little Stephen never got a chance to finish being a kid, am I right?"

The session went on as therapy does, and Stephen confronted his issues as best he could.

When it was all said and done, the emotional dragon slayed for the moment, the doctor asked:

"Do you still want that prescription you asked for?"

"No, thanks, Doc. I think it's safe to say I don't," Stephen said.

“I didn't think you would,” the doctor said.

Several sessions later, Dr. Nixon asked Stephen what he would do if he won the lottery.

“So, let's just say, hypothetically, you won the jackpot. A hundred and ten million right now, so you'd net around eighty. What would you do with yourself? You don't have to tell me. Just write it down.”

The doctor handed Stephen a yellow legal pad and a pen.

Stephen wasn't too interested at first. He stared at the paper loathing the idea. Then, the clinician in him got to work, as his inner child started to play. His list began:

- Learn SCUBA diving and dive in the Arctic
- Go motorcycling all the way from the U.S to cape horn
- Grow all my food myself, organically, live off the land, have a zero carbon-foot
- Go to France, do Paris, the south beaches, the whole French experience
- Start a painting gallery in the River Arts District

Later that day, passing by his neighborhood variety store, Stephen did decide to pick up a ticket, just for the hell of it. The ticket sat, forgotten, in Stephen's wallet for several days, while he spent time with his thoughts, walking along the shore of Myrtle Beach, or holed-up in his sloppy room in a discount roach-motel built to capitalize on the spring break market.

One such time as this, surfing the ultra-slow wifi, a news piece caught his eye on the site where he had his webmail account. “North Carolinan Lottery Winner Has Yet to Claim Prize.” His eyes open wide, and he clicked the link.

“A Powerball ticket purchased in Asheville, NC, has still not been redeemed for over two weeks, since the winning numbers were announced,” the article began. “The winning ticket entitles the bearer to the jackpot prize of \$110 million.”

Stephen, remembering his ticket, checked the numbers, and discovered he had, in fact, won the lottery.

Days later, having gone to the lottery office, filled out reams of paperwork, and gotten his oversized check, Stephen went to Dr. Nixon's office for what was supposed to be the final of their sessions, where Dr. Nixon had been prepared to write a clean bill of health for the licensing board. Taped to the door of the office, however, was an obituary clipped from a newspaper. "Doctor Wilfred Edwin Nixon passed away Friday, May 24th, at age seventy-four." Stephen stood solemnly looking at the clipping for a time, his eyes flooding.

"What is this!! I'm sorry, my friend. I'm sorry you're gone!! Thank you. Thank you! I know it's because of you that I came to money," Stephen uttered in emotional disarray.

He heard a voice in the back of his mind. "A part of me lives on in you," it said. "Just do everything you wrote down that you would do, and all will be right with me."

The opening party for Gallery Psyque occurred not a month later. With swarms of people looking at his art, wine and juice being served by bartenders, Stephen spotted an unusual guest: Patrick Jones.

"Stephen. Thank you. What you said? It helped me out. I turned over a new leaf."

A stunningly dressed woman stood by the boy and put her arm around his shoulder. Stephen recognized him as Patrick's mother, Tina Jones.

"I'm sorry to hear you lost your license, but it's been tough, you know? I'm a single mother, I can't have some therapist making my son worse. So I filed a complaint. But as it turns out, you didn't make him worse at all. Patrick's best friends with that kid he beat up. He looks after him at school. And he's making honor role. Honor role! He's brought nothing home but D's and E's before, and now he's making honor role!"

France was more benevolent to the spirit than Stephen had imagined. Climbing down a ladder from a boat off a beach in southern France, Stephen prepared to practice the techniques he'd learned with his instructor Jean Jaques Rhomer, a deep sea diver of world renown. On the boat sat Tina and Patrick.

“Have fun down there,” Tina said to Stephen's exposed head.

“To boldly go where...many people in wetsuits have gone...many times before,” Stephen said.

“Don't get the bends, man” said Patrick. “We'll see you when you come up.”

Stephen let go of his hold on the ladder and let the ocean envelope him.

I An Interview with Donovan Parks after he Reaches Spiritual Transcendance | Fiction

Rénee had a lot to do with my moving forward. I'm not sure how we survived the world events, or why us. Why we were spared. I often ponder this, but then inevitably decide there's nothing there to consider. We're here, that's it.

The taoists I met in Montreal ultimately were the ones there to help me turn my life around when I decided to give up the old games and start being a human being again. Waldo Feng just happened to be in the right place at the right time, and he sensed me out. Knew what he was doing when he made me sit and play Chinese chess with him, even though I had no concept of what I was doing.

I didn't altogether trust him at first. I wasn't sure what he was after or about. But as it turned out, he was helping me be a better person. Him and his people showed me how to do things that built strength and awareness. Clear opened my eyes, including my third eye.

Tai chi everyday became a regular discipline, and things just kept rolling from there.

Now I'm just being true to my gypsy nature. My mom never talked about it, but I know that her side of the family were actual gypsies from Romania. My great grandfather, or so, appeared to me many times in dreams during my life. I know he's with me always.

Rénee went of on her quest, to South America, and met her shaman. I thought we'd never see each other again. But somehow, it was meant to be, and we both got reunited, our shadows already processed, individually completed. But there's a compatibility that we bring to each other and we look out for each other. As Waldo would say it's very "hau," which he meant as very right, in accord with the universe. So far it's been a pretty smooth ride, despite the rockiness humanity had to face. I'm so grateful I met this woman. There were a few incidents which make clear I wouldn't have survived on my own. I guess I helped her out through a few rough spots, too.

It couldn't be any other way than it is. I'm so confused and saddened for all the people that disappeared, but I know they're either around here somehow, or were aligned to the Darkness, and will be going away for a while. It's an interesting time. Rénee jokes it's up to us to repopulate the Earth! In a way, that's true. There's only so many survivors. We have one baby on the way and who knows where life will lead from there. But I can't complain about my life as a hunter-gathering, living as the ancients did, in touch with the ways of my nomadic ancestors. I'll never miss that capitalistic hell that ruled all life before, and made me a two-bit cheat, grifter, thief, with no purpose. There again, the purpose was to become the individual I am today.

Mindful Thinking- Writer's Assessment

My writing suffers the most when I try to write with my mind and not my heart. My mind has been extensively trained through college to rationalize and analyze. It can't compete with the vastness of the flow. Thus when I am in a state of mindfulness- essentially waking meditation- the words come naturally, no need to fight. However, half the battle has been relying on that inner source.

When you have a paper coming up it's easy to make for the coffee and crank up the brain. But this is not ultimately how I get anything done. It shows up in the writing. When the writing is from the mind, much less intelligent than the universe, it is wrought with error, boring, lacking flavor and personality, and often without plot or structure of any sort.

This often shows up when I'm working on a timeline, as I frequently would in school. It's also difficult to hear the idea channel when occupied with thought, which I most often am. Thus, some of the writings I've included have that lilted affect.

When I give in and trust myself and The Flow or the Source, however, writing in a quiet, relaxed state, that's when the better work

emerges. That accounts for the artist's statement and my poem "The Living City."

Of course, even with The Flow, the words don't just come to you in complete, publishable format. Usually my work isn't shareable until at least the third draft, present specimen being no exception. I don't suppose it'd be that way for an awakened zenmaster, but for us mortal types, imperfection is the nature of any practice.

One offense you can observe often is my tendency to write long sentences. I often use commas to string multiple thoughts together. Zen people would focus on a single concept at a time. This is difficult to do with busy Western acculturation. Apposition is a temptation I've not learned to conquer. Thankfully though, I'm getting over the compulsion to explain myself parenthetically. (once a rampant mania.)

At times, when I've channeled The Force or The Flow, others have liked my dialog. An example is the script "Sage Advice," one of my earlier college works, from the Seattle days, in Portia Jeffries's course. There's a wit that comes through in my dialogs on occasion. I yearn for the humor muse to visit, but it doesn't happen often, perhaps because I'm at a

frame in my life when I don't get the joke. I'm confident funniness will visit again if it has visited once. Until then, I know I should include more dialog instead of trying to tell a story myself. It's true that I've often tried to tell more than to show. That's obviously too easy. But a regimen of courses does not a writer make. Only tenure at the keys or the pen will bring improvement of the magical tricks of the craft.

Professor Jeffries, then instructing at Seattle Central, but since retired, was influential. Her introductory creative writing course provided me with a great deal of writing and reading insight. I regret that I shortchanged it frequently in order to barely pass British literature with a "C". But because I learned of my channeling abilities during that time, there was no sweat in producing creative work.

I've been told I create a strong "I narrator" voice. Working in the first person comes naturally to me because of my channeling style. This emerged with the ultrashort epistolary "Portal," also from Prof. Jeffries's class. This voice only works in fiction. When I have to play the role of myself, as here, there's much less consistency. But as long as I avoid talking about myself, I'm okay. I can take on a character and make him or

her real. This is also seen in the bits from my novel, which began in Elizabeth Cooke's literary novel class. This course was really beneficial as to me, literary writing is essentially writing from The Flow. As a result, this course was a bridge between college and channeling, which has helped to reduce the compartmentalization between the two. Only when these walls have been taken down completely will my writing be consistently mindful.

When I consider specialty, I consider myself primarily a novelist. Graphic novels are always welcome and possible, but I don't control the wood supply, I just stoke the fire with whatever's around. Short stories? Stranger things have happened. Poetry happens too. What can you do? No, seriously, I've nothing against any form, any more than an artist would have anything against a particular brush in his or her possession, but may have a favorite or two. And of course, by definition, I am an artist. My medium just happens to be words.

The environment is a concern I can't let go of. I can't write a story without trying to include a public service message of some type about brightening the Earth or being a better human. Vancouver writer Douglas Coupland has been a guru in learning how to do this while still retaining

entertainment value. Since finding his book "Jpod" in a Seattle library, I've read just about all his fiction. Two of my recent short stories "Detritivor" and "Therapy Practice," are indirectly inspired by Coupland. Both of these stories come out of Pat O'Donnell's advanced fiction.

Response to the draft of "Heaviest of Gales," the story that lead to "Therapy Practice" was mostly unfavorable. I had this useless character who lost his job but had plenty of money. Instead of moving on in a brave new direction, he stayed in his comfortable apartment and did nothing while the world around him was in destruction. Many of Coupland's protagonists live comfortable lifestyles that for one reason or another, are brought to an end.

It's been a while since I read any of these books, but I know Coupland has more skill than I in dealing with these situations. A couple people got the overall message in the work, however, that focusing on oneself too much and not on the outside world can bring about an implosive destruction of sorts. At least I knew I wasn't too far off. But that lack of going anywhere is one of the problems encountered in my work, and with the channeling process in general. I also tend to ramble on

erratically, more of a character flaw than just a writing trait. But it's *my* character flaw, so at least I have something to hold onto for that elusive sense of identity that comes with transcendentalism.

In general, *my* endings leave something, often a lot, to be desired. Endings are difficult. Even revision after revision can yield a less-than-perfect ending. I've lost *my* sense of the Flow by this time. And when I lose that, I'm like a horse without a parachute. Okay, maybe more like a gremlin without a sail. Ergh...it's just...that *my* writing loses something when it doesn't have that certain *je ne sais quoi*. As I said, *my* writing suffers when I'm not in touch with Flow, which is why I'm going to have to quit while I'm ahead, or only just beginning to be behind.

Flow doesn't always come when you want it. It *especially* doesn't come when you need it. But it comes when it is ready. If that should be three AM on a Monday, then you'd best get out of bed and "take the fax." Otherwise, your writing will be as vapid and uninspired as these last couple paragraphs. That's just the way it is.

| *It is Written: Annotated Bibliography* |

*-Indicates an item in this collection, which can be found on page number listed.

Recent Stuff-

***Detritivore-** Short story born in Pat O'Donnell's advanced fiction. (p. 12 of this collection.)

***Current-** A poem produced for Shana Youngdahl's Introduction to Poetry. Based on the concept of sensory detail and revised after viewing some material from Anthony Bourdain, which lent itself to a very convenient rhyme that portrays the class divide in Seattle. Read for my senior reading. (p. 5)

***Therapy Practice-** Second story from Pat O'Donnell's course. The really-sappy feel good ending almost seems too terrible to publish, but it's the best I've been able to do with the time constraints, and it's a big improvement to the first concept, in which the protagonist was laid-off as a manager of a pencil factory but was very well off, and did nothing for eight pages, like a wart on a toad. (p. 22)

Mad Hatter's Journal- A longterm idea for an underground publication, which I finally brought to life, along with this entire collection, for Jeff Thomson's senior seminar. An assignment for a "guerrilla literature" project prompted me to dig up old ideas and bind them together in a rag-tag collection with a bunch of fake aliases.

Wings Aloft- New m/s in the tradition of "Choose Your Own Adventure" books. An effort to make a quick buck, which will probably never pan out, as I'm too lazy to design the labyrinth of pages, and interest in the subject matter, not heartfelt as it is, seems quite unlikely.

The Self-Awarded MFA- A blog explaining my plans to provision myself with a master's level education in comics. Currently hosted by blogspot.

2012-

***Learning to Breathe-** Eco novel following a thuggish pair and their personal transformations. Cultivated in Elizabeth Cooke's fiction course. (Pages 7 and 31 contain sneak peeks of this novel's protagonist at different stages in his life.)

From Gretchen Legler's Non-Fiction Writing course

Getting There- Socially-critiquing discourse in getting around sustainability, or more specifically, *not* getting around.

Girly Man- Short non-fiction piece, explaining my struggles with existing in a harsh world with high expectations of males in terms of athletic ability.

Respect Each Other, Respect Mother- Really half-assed radio essay on the '90s green movement.

From Dr. Legler's Non-Fiction Literature Course

Bus Driving Security Guard- An autobiographical mini-comic about my stint as a Greyhound driver. Prepared as final project for the class. Unfortunately, not formatted in an easily reproducible manner.

Bright Side- A semi-autobiographical, philosophical comic strip I was going to work on with a cartoonist, an idea which fell by the wayside. For now.

2010-2011 The Capitol Hill Years- From Seattle Central Community College

***Portal-** A short epistolary prepared as an exercise in Portia Jeffries's creative writing class. (p. 10)

Sage Advice- A short comedy film script, based on an early college dialogue exercise. One guy in Seattle wanted to film this, but it never happened. I hope one day to film it myself.

Short article with forgotten name- I don't know what I called it, but I know it was a preachy little blurb about cutting down on dietary sugars that got published in the Central Circuit and netted me a small amount of [gluten free] dough.

Long, nameless wordprocessing file of vented thought- Produced at the Seattle Central computer lab on a really bad day. By voicing my feelings in continuous outpouring of the keyboard, I discovered that I could channel writing and decided that to pick up discarded ambitions from the wastebasket, instead of continuing toward social work. Incidentally, I also discovered the cathartic properties of writing and the arts.

Pre-seriousness- From before my formal studies as a writer

The Adventures of Bill Shakespeare in the Latter Day- A comedic screenplay in which Shakespeare arrives in the future, through technology invented by Da Vinci, and mentors a young screenwriter.

Making Life Work- A curiously prolific webcourse written when I was close to graduating high school ten years ago. Published by Virtual University (vu.org,) for a very tidy \$200 honorarium. Basically highlighted manifestation and such, but, ironically, I haven't had a publishing success like this since. Provided me with false hope toward becoming a freelance writer without college.

Chronicles of Applewood- A shameful and long forgotten knock-off of the Redwall series favored at the time, written in pencil when I was around 11 years old.

**I'm sure there are quite a few more developments from since I learned the written language,
but most of them are forever lost or amount to zeros and ones on my computers and data
storage devices, or scribbles in my notebooks and pads, previous and existing.
This is all I can dredge up of any import.**