A FAILED ATTEMPT

[**current**](#current)

the letter

***Alone, astride highway 41***

Alone,

astride Highway 41,

ahead into the haze.

Oh, my mercury mind

Oh, my mercury maze.

A steaming stream forthcoming—

intricately pathed ways.

Oh, my mercury mind

Oh, my mercury maze.

Again, again, why a letter. Like an invitation for a vampire. Cross the threshold. Rationalize the process. The way. This my anti-tweet. This my anti-tweet machine. My settling chamber anachronistic. The Anachronistic is fun and can be refreshing and kind of jarring and enlivening sometimes. Novel even.

But just the attempt to take a snap shot of any given moment or cross section of your life and trying to do it honesyly. If Hemingway made writing accessible to everyone, then DFW made it inadvisable to everyone. He hung himself. Dave Berman hung himself. Elliot Smith stabbed himself. Hemingway blew his head off. Robin Williams hung himself. Anthony Bourdain. INXS lead singer. David Carradine aka “Grasshopper”.

So much more fluent and organized and possessing the wherewithal and collected energy to ontextualize what the fuck I’m talking about.

I have found some modern efficiencies. Typing and saving text to file. Deconstructing the process of constrcftion. Doing it all out of order. Not worrying about order. Dating things for reference, but letting themese and topics and whateve else sneaks in to Shanghai my line of thought. Embracing my fragmentation. Leveraging my fragmentation. Finding abundance in expression and pressure release. Writing become about subtraction, editing, styling, settling, organizing, the more emotional stuff has been dashed out, discovered. The hard part is over. You got to that place where you were present enough to string a couple of sentences together. This is not something to take lightly or to underestimate. Because if you can find that state consistently and have in place a relatively inertialess editorial processing then you are suddenly transformed from being a frustrated, unproductive, sullen, down on himself writer into a productive, creating, creative, discipline, hopeful, ambitious, momentum building journeyman of words.

06/06/2021

In the depths of despair-- feeling failed and collapsed-- wife has mentally collapsed. Mother is pummeling him from the esoteric Catholic right. He’s writing a novel. A workaholic really. Heroically pushing through all this shit to find a path for the family. I am leading the way. ( this is either delusional, or totally spot on)….

Betsy out of commission on the couch. Do I try and totally take over and let her collapse and recover or do I encourage her to keep performing her tasks, stay active?

Semi-chaotic morning drop off. Didn’t know where to park. Esme forget to put on her mask. We both forgot her bag in the car.

My relationship with my mother is flaring and contentious. My wife is depressed and collapsed. My daughters are precious, but needy and I feel very wounded and need space and time to heal and concentration to reinvent myself with new knowledge.

06/03/2021

Good night of sleep last night. A good recovery night after having drank two much the last two days. Should really give it a rest. Its such a shitty cycle and one that has me shitting all day. We are these habits. We are the sum total of these habits.

04/01/2022

Why is this burner on low (forgot to turn burner off when I made hot chocolate this morning). Have not rolled over 401K. Do not have life insurance. Have not processed all this notes that I vomited up all over the river. Offered to bring betsy more coffee in the living room, even poured her a cup. Then poured myself a cup, left my cup on top of the coffee maker and took her cup into the workroom with me. Back into my scattered thoughts, my gallant offer a muttered and unfollowed through on offer.

I feel super buried -- but that is kind of the point, no?

How do we protect ourselves from other people’s wounds?

12/28/2021

Today is day 5 of contracting the Coronavirus -- Christmas brain fog. Wife also has it. Feeling depressed. Back is flaring up. She can’t see her Chiropractor though because she has the virus, so we shelter in place, and do what we do and say what we say and go where we go and play what we play.

12/22/2021

How do you come back from being smoked out? Is like ever fun again?

12/14/2021

He had been on a great journey and now he was back. He had taken notes and tried to get things to settle down before him.

He had found a new way to walk and run.

He had found a new way to eat.

He had found a new way to drink.

He had found a new way to learn and study.

He had found a new perspective on technology and work and his place in the 21st century.

Attempting to gain some sort of expertise. A place from which to root from.

12/12/2021

I have been so closed off and wounded and exhausted and withdrawn and paranoid. Were those people sent there just to encourage me? If so they were empathetic people being graciously affirming. We are in a good place. Our passion for our family is intact. Our passion for coding and web development is intact.

12/10/2021

THC , caffeine, alcohol and slow release endorphine harvests are my chemical jams.

Betsy askes me to clarify if I do or do not want lunch and I receive it like an accusation-- are you eating!?! I am not. I just want some THC actually and some time to keep working on this letter that I have been hacking at to my cousin over the last 16 months.

Betsy then later tries to get me to do the pee dance with Helena and I feel 1,000,000 miles away… and like I am racing against some invisible clock just to get through these notes so I can get to those other notes… it is a despairing progression beccaseu I don’t know the time line when I will be better and more stable for betsy and that is frustrating and scary and something I don’t know how to articulate or explain to any one because I honestly do feel that more than anything else for my sanity for the qualitative goodness of my existence I need to get over the hump with my soul-crushing writing process and start to be able to work without feeling the need to apologize to any one for it. This is the path that I have chosen.

What does it mean when my penmenship changes so dramatically depending on my mood, my mindset. Shape shifter. Lazy. Inconsistent. Insane. Not sane. Insanity.

11/12/2021

Alcohol floated me along as inspiration dissipated.

9/21/2021

12:51

His sense of self had completely collapsed. He had given over to addictive habit, trying to tie the ardency of his addiction with his efforts to build career changing computer skills.

He and his wife were manically distant. They hadn’t had sex in two months since they’d made love at his parents house. He’d been drinking too much and smoking himself low in the evenings. He’d been doing this for a year.

Was he rebuilding himself brick by brick or was he was completely falling the fuck apart. It was disturbing how unclear it was. This was a sign of a problem, no?

9/19/2021

Stoned dad -- passed out, dreaming about apps, drunk moon, stumbling home, vomiting child, stretching, couch sleeping, hand writing, the tree Davidss, Diamonds, Ruby.

And then a full on mental collapse -- having given up on any notions of propriety- he had lost his mind completely at last -- he was genuinely curious about data migrations now -- he cold write simple ones and have the data around he’d captured in the browser. He’d tested the program. Writing the test script even before the program script. Running the tests and having them fail red until he had written enough production code for the program to pass the tests. This is a deliberate, disciplined way to develop software which allows a lot of the key design to be emergent as you can design your tests with S.O.L.I.D object oriented programming principles in mind.

HTTP routing -- Sinatra

Keys to scalability???

Have not been coming to the table. Have not bee taking my time. Esme vomiting over the side of her loft. Helena irritable and oppositional-- “ I not.” (I won’t, I don’t want to, etc.), betsy hungover after an ill-advised cigarette and an extra drink and daddy’s home head high on cannabis nursing a flaring up back and an incendiary existential crisis as he tries to self-teach himself into the tech world while pilfering time to waste on his embarrassing stabs at self-expression.

Chasing the inchoate -- the just over there --

The humble becoming, the crumbling into being, the coarse course of all substantial change.

Tooth and nail

Bottle and screen

Floating feathers

Down a public stream

Water lilies, Ophelia’s lips

Grassy lawns and barefoot children

A mason jar of fireflies brightening as the day dims.

8/25/2021

Dark winter days, deep depressed introversion, deep February Tundra. Sunless days where I kind of stoned or kind of drunk wrote and coded and attempted to approach a better way to cope. A better way to maintain satisfactory relationships.

Eating more vegetarian food / keto light diet.

Barefoot running

Coding / web and app development

Writing

Music

Attempting to approach the nexus of my being

7/15/2021

My kids are making me crazy. My kids are activating my craziness. I don’t have the wherewithal to get back to a good solid, healthy routine. I am exhausted in the evening, falling asleep on Belle-Belle’s bed, passing out on the couch, just like an old wineo.

06/06/2021

We were lost now. Sweaty. Stoned. Shitting in the stagnate afternoon. Slow boweled. Plopping. Thick build up. Expanding. Widening. Crowning. Bulging. Pushing. Fathering. Pinching. Stretching.

05/24/2021

You are annoyed with me because Helena on my watch while I was trying to work on the porch. You are not that annoyed with me. But I am annoyed with it as another sign of the fall out of our destabilized roles. I am so tired of fighting these battles, but they have to be fought. I have to write and I have to code and I have to work and I do not need to feel guilty about the fact that my parenting suffers because of these things. My parenting suffers because of these things because I do not have the wherewithal for them because I am trying to muster the wherewithal to write better and finally turn the corner on my relationship with writing and code better so I can get a job in the tech industry based on my technical ability, which also trying to plug in my free time with reading (to support my writing and tech and just general solid, creative mental health), continue to completely evolve the way I take care of my body, and keep pursuing my life long goal of being truly bilingual in English and Mandarin.

05/22/2021

Don’t feel good. Slogging. Purple-blue bruise on left shoulder from Moderna shot. Lethargic. Feeling badly that she has not gotten Helena dressed. She is low energy and speaks slower than normal and is slightly more curved forward in the shoulders like she is bracing from a loud noise. She feels like she has not done anything and is not motivated to do anything. I am not trying to make a value judgement here, I am just trying to juxtapose our different headspaces, as her coming in to inform me of all of this, her black cloud that is trying to work up the motivation to take a shower and me in the morning popping up early to smoke and stretch and shower to keep the plausibility possible. And maybe my duplicity which is partially fueling my productively by providing an emotional block from your mental health struggles and turmultuous sense of being unsettled.

Can you at least get her dressed she says as I wait mid-sentence to continue trying to barrel through my ridiculously inefficient writing project, 1200 pages behind in my editing process. Feeling unsure when any of the 60 odd pieces and hundreds of poem fragments that my process that spawned will round the corner to completion, or if any of them even really have to. Perhaps it is just the process that is necessary. I shoot that down because the starts to get a little dark. Like I am only living to write things that no one will ever read. I could be content with that if my other foundamentals could be worked out— meaning I really do think I could make a life with creative writing being a central concern and life organizing practice without having to have the practice financially support me. I think my dad’s running has been a powerful and practical example of how that can work out in his life. His engagement with writing comes out of a sense of necessity, discipline, community, health, tradition, life-organizing, time-management, self-defining, cultivation, unusual level of commitment, esoteric knowledge/specialized knowledge, life-organizing interface and self-defining reference activity.

05/20/2021

Your awkward use of language baffles me— weirdly causal and jokey about really important things and really sanctimonious and serious about others.

Beard oil.

That’s the kind of story you only tell your wife, buddy.

Ave Maria University.

Connected with the bartender.

Later— man, that guys parents must be really disappointed with him. He’s got a law degree and his running a bar. Give me a break.

My brother was always saying these cruel things about people behind their back. I remember being at his wedding and having his groomsmen bitch about him and what an ass he was. This was after one of the groomsmen have gotten divorced and just a few years before the other one did. They were both kind of assholes, which I had always kind of gotten the sense of, but had tolerated because I was younger than them and perhaps deserved some stern patronizing for all the important things I still had yet to learn which they had learned years ago and were now so bored with the information that they could hardly be bothered to go into it… but it they must… eye roll, head eye, minor seizure trying to access the deeply recessed esoteric fucking knowledge which has incrementally built up in their grey matter like feces impacted into the block colon.

05/17/2021

May have just found a new way to work with all the different files. Open with cmd, add, save, close. Keep things clean. Keep things simple. Keep things Booker T. Washington.

05/06/2021

The nice thing about being an extremely locked in introvert is that it is very easy to get all of the attention you need without having to pay a cent.

Time. Expenditures of time. What is your social media habit costing you? No really. An of your habits. What are you losing out on by continuing X behavior which consumes X quantity of resources(time, money, attention). The importance of budgeting time, money, attention.

Messages and behavior— Culture- we value these messages, we value these behaviors.

How we talk => input and output.

* The quintessential role of information consumption
* Advertising (paying for a piece of the public attention pie).

How is culture even possible with all of these underlying contradictions and tensions and ultimately soul crushing realities and potentialities for despair and of course our ultimate death which is a guaranteed phenomenon. Our worst fears are definitely going to be realized someday. What is fear? What do we fear? We fear missing out on things. I fear missing out on my life with my daughters and my wife and our extended family and friends because I don’t have the wherewithal to be physically present or fully emotionally and mentally present because of my inability to each an abiding peace about my vocational trajectory, sustainability, appeal. Confronting this achingly unresolved question and not just theoretically, but pragmatically has been the most abiding question that I have wrestled with over the last 20 years.

And how can a single text (story, film, poem, etc.) be shared between such wildly different cultural contexts and still create meaning? Hold truth? Emotion? How do cultural texts transmit between cultures? Is it the texts themselves or our attitude towards the texts?

The state of college sports, as it edges towards a more equitably just professionalized stage— why shouldn’t it change and evolve. Our economy has changed and evolved and continues to change and evolve. To survive in this country and culture you have to be focused on something, but you also have to avoid the trap of feeling like you have to focus on everything.

I have been feeling really critical of other people lately and I have been feeling really critical of myself. I am trying to evolve my thinking on social interactions and find ways in to being friendlier and my life affirming.

I also want be improve my ability to let things go. I said something lame because I was trying to be social when I didn’t feel like it… who cares. Let it go. Be kind, but don’t tolerate bullying. Let things go. Recognize that for systems to work there have to be checks and balances, check-ins and sit-downs and go-overs and do-overs. This is why these relationships are so intense. The love and connection is deep, but the potential for abuse on the neglect to smoothing spectrum is real and the necessity to great a family culture of consciously or unconsciously codified messages and behaviors. Invisible design. Designing by negation. Designing with time. Designing with intention. Designing with preparation.

At 42 I now have at long last, reached a theoretically tenable career path for literally the first time. In the past I had always been open to exploring different options, but very rarely making life decisions based on the job. More like I would like to focus on this in my life right now, but I need to support myself so I will do this job. And for the first part of my wrokig career by stitching together a string of serving and then teaching gigs and then luxury sales jobs I was able to support myself and then my girlfriend and later wife living in several international hubs for a time- briefy in Europe (Berlin), the Asia (Beijing), and then back to Chicago. Through the moves and the living and working I developed and change as a human being in both subtle and obvious ways.

Could write more about the culture that I came from and the culture that I entered. The symbols of the previous culture and symbols of the new culture. A miasma of ideas. Not some revolutionary minds. But smart, curious, funny, caustic, generous dudes.

Varied possibilities; manifold limitations.

Had he changed? Or was he still that stilted, sort of pueriole, half-formed mancub he lumbered through his twentieis as, his Hemingway paunch hanging proudly down. If he didn’t have the habit he’d be open to shooting it.

The Yoga Fanatic

* Exhaused mom, strung out Yoga dad chasing god and writing and language both human and computer. (11/19/2020)
* He was a thin, but thickening literary playboy (11/19/2020; 04/26/2021).

Layers: Lied about computer programing to write novel, novel reveals that he had been lying about drug use. I had it clearer in my mind before where each subsequent reveal shifted the perspective and deepened the narrative.

1. He: frantically studying to reboot career; she: put upon and exhausted and suspicious
2. He: actually working on a novel that has real potential; she: contrite and apologetic and confronting her own failed artistic ambitions, sacrificed for her family, supportive and also resentful.
3. He: talented writer, but disturbed, sociopathic liar; she: impressed with his artistic achievement and kind of the ultimate realization of their mutual younger goals, but in his commitment to them he has broken the trust and bond and openness with his wife, she feels distant and alienated and obfuscated, the enemy, anobstacle, something to be avoided or to at least keep in the dark. He has lost himself to the family and to her in his quest to ultimately take care of and provide for and have the wherewithal to connect and be present. Hemingway;’s simple trope of he had to work every day so that he could enjoy the rest of the day. This idea that work is a good necessary thing, but then the incredible importance of being bale to choose your own work. Work on your own things. Your father has been a good example of that seemingly. Both of our fathers. Teaching gave them a chance to engage and share, but also the smoke scree to pursue their own interests. My father with his endless home improvement and car projects and however you would characterize your own father’s decades of crasftsmenship and dedication and curating of his space and place. Its impressive and admireable, but I feel world’s away from either exact mindset, which is good and fine though I do take to heart what I have interrupted, misintterperted about their attitudes to work or how I perceived that they worked or heard about them working.

I have been so fucking scattered! This is something that I have struggled to contextualize. What is your responsibility to contextualize something like that. A psychological

**CURRENT**

**04/18/2022**

I would prefer not to. Sit alone at home and play the blues all day

Stoned in September, like some sort of somber 6th Beatle.

The words just kept coming and it became clear that his nervous breakdown wasn’t completely over just yet. He need to get it all out. Like a bladder full of urine that needed to be emptied before he could fully return to the moment his mind was littered with unnecessary flotsam and jetsam.

**04/13/2022**

Digging into writing. Fighting my way through feeling over-caffienated and THC freezed. Brittle mind looping around my shivering skills. May need to run out and shake it off. Easter weekend 2022-- when I formally broke with my family-- leaving the family feed without leaving it. Gaining distance from my angry mother, distance from disinterested father -- our conversations little more than him telling me his workout splits and enumerating whatever rightwing grievances are in the air. Reactionary statements echoing the media gilded line. I need water and movement and breath and earth. I need to root and settle and just simply be.

**03/06/2022**

Shitting for the third time today. You think someone had too much beer last night? I tally up the ouces and figure I essentially ended up consumed 8 12 oz. cans of beer. I feel like shit today.

Sleeping in my clothes. Sweating in my sleep. Not returning texts. Dropping off of social media completely. Eating simply or not at all.

**02/27/2022**

There was a cold, clear organization about the whole thing-- Apollo-- taking notes on the process of the breakdown -- chronicling the process of his unravelling-- attempting to escape cultures, dropping out of the rat race to insulate himself with more marketable skills.

Attempting to settle and consolidate and find my way-- collapsing, consolidating, recreating-- the Phoenix, finally finding her new nest. Transforming for what is next.

The spells had a pattern. They would come on and he would write a bunch, maybe even feel like he’d finished something, or just force himself to call it done and send it out. In this way he chased off most of his friends and family. Alcohol and weed were his loyal friends -- state savers and perpetuators. Face savors. Shut him up in his bubbling pressure cooker. Trapped in his webby attic with his own personal collection of static. His closets all overflowing with bones.

Between spells he tried to have a few long thoughts and jot down notes on them and try to keep the notes from getting too thatched up and unapproachable.

**02/15/2022**

The sleave of my hoodie smells like urine. I unloaded dirty dishes from one rake of the dishwasher. I went back to the bedroom from the work room to get a pair of socks to only return to the ork room and find an identical pair of sockjs on the table. When I went back for the pipe and the lighter and the weed that he had stached under the baby jogger in the coach house basement it was gone. Because he had moved it early and forgeotten, which he would realize when he gets upstairs, but for a few trailing moments he runs through the various scenarios of who could have possibly gotten into the basement to take his weed…the reporter guy, the nice land lord guy. And then when the weed is upstairs he wonders if Micah is archivlly fucking wirth him. The human behavior comment. The Sugar cane comment-- about it being like weed. Had he said that, or did I just misunderstand him.\

Thought I had lost my glasses, but they were just by my writing pad. Betsy is in the midst of her period and tetchy which always draws an underscore beneath my minimalist shittiness. Caught up in a cycle of self-creation and recreation.

We have blindly arrived at the Ides once more and the yin wates great me at day break with bird song and sunshine and there is a good energy in the air despire the challenges of the day ahead.

We make our plays in the day and then we fade away. We’ve got to take our time.

Sorry I’m so slow.

*Take your time.*

Sorry I am so distracted.

*Take your time*.

Sorry my concentration and wherewithal are completely shredded.

*Take your time.*

Get the fuck over yourself! You’ve got to cease working so hard to be the protagonist.

How do you bring your panicked state down. How do you settled and focus when you fe shredded and browned out.

Settle to zero.

Get your baseline straight.

Get your funds straight.

Hum yourself there-- find melody in the trees there.

Are we caught in a loop yet? We wanted to get caught in a loop. Some sort of beneficent rut to dig myself through. A trench to burrow along. Go underground, come back up when I have made progress against all of this enemy lines.

**02/14/2022**

Wrote a reaction to Dan’s latest collection of drawings. Trying to overcome my digital dislocation. Stile.

**02/12/2022**

You have this manic streak that is exacerbated or at least thrown into a more pronounced imbalance whe you are regularly smoking weed. It puts a weird drag in your step. You are reflective, but removed from people around you-- which can lead to certain forms of productivity, but also a fair amount of restlessness, anxiety, guilt, dishonesty, obfuscation, denial, roguish owning, sneaking, neglecting, disorganizing, stress enducing, lazy, self-statifying.

Why do you need the chemical crutches of caffeine, THC, and alcohol?

You want to move beyond this conflicted dichotomy and begin a new sober forward chapter in which you successfully launch your career in tech.

Your financial stability and more stabilized work and leisure cycle will allow you to agilely continue to develop your poems and songs and letters with a confidence and an organization that staves off the mainc and the blocked-- finding a channel between the extremes to work in a consistent, sane, steady, balanced way. This is possible. I can live the life I want. Engaging in the activities that I want to engage in with the people I would like to engage in them with. The people I love and want to help flourish and grow. The people whose lives have been entrusted to me, bonded to my life. I want my efforts and my love to overflow to my family and not be cut off due to insecurity and stress, nervousness, exhaustion, general lack of wherewithal.

**12/22/2021**

Quit for a month a Christmas, got lcear and rwot e a few steady handed letters. Turned the corner on program testing, then feel back into the old habit. Following the mercury trail. Seeking inspiration from your ragged lines. Trying to follow an intuitive line and ending up around depressed and depressive people.. people striving for the new and the original. People attempting to invest their identity on their creative prowess their ability to conjure meaning and delight and form from the swirling mess of masses all around them.

My manic run ray is streaming down on all that has meaning.

**11/26/2021**

You understand the kind of life you want and understand that you need to keep working to build the professional skills you need to do the kind of work you want to do to make your imagined life possible.

You need to pick a direction and just hammer. You need to pick your shit and start shoveling. Pick your problems.

I may have lost my mind attempting to forge a new identity… but I think that might have been the point.

**11/25/2021**

Not a good person-- need more time.

Not a good linguist-- need more time.

Not a good listener-- need more time.

Not a good novelist-- need more time.

Not a good musician-- need more time.

Not a good computer scientist-- need more time

**11/23/2021**

Old, persistent, unwanted thoughts that lead to repetitive behaviors or compulsions.

**11/01/2021**

How do you escape these false narratives. How do you get a new perspective? How do you travel to a new city. I feel kind of manic and what is the problem? The problem is quitting? Weed? Right? Is that the only problem? Just get to work. My typing feels good. Where am I? What is the reality ofe this paranoia? I have come a long way with programming and aI still have a long way to go, but I am nervous as to whether my weed intact is going to mess that up, just like I was worried about my back messing up the process. None of this is existential. All of this is fundamental. Get to work. Keep things Categorized. You have changed. You hae become a difference person. A better person. You can come through this.

### Mania and hypomania

Both a manic and a hypomanic episode include three or more of these symptoms:

* Abnormally upbeat, jumpy or wired
* Increased activity, energy or agitation
* Exaggerated sense of well-being and self-confidence (euphoria)
* Decreased need for sleep
* Unusual talkativeness
* Racing thoughts
* Distractibility
* Poor decision-making — for example, going on buying sprees, taking sexual risks or making foolish investments

**Major depressive episode**

* Depressed mood, such as feeling sad, empty, hopeless or tearful (in children and teens, depressed mood can appear as irritability)
* Marked loss of interest or feeling no pleasure in all — or almost all — activities
* Significant weight loss when not dieting, weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite (in children, failure to gain weight as expected can be a sign of depression)
* Either insomnia or sleeping too much
* Either restlessness or slowed behavior
* Fatigue or loss of energy
* Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
* Decreased ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness
* Thinking about, planning or attempting suicide

11/01/2021

I am depressed and I have been for a long time because I am stressed about this transition, but I am not stressed about this transition. I am stressed about not being able to settle into myself.

And the he was quiet and he realized he was just sitting there waiting until he went out and smoked again and a sucking sound, very hollow, some layer of traffic in the city at night.

His white board said 9/9/2021. It was 11/03/2021. He sighed and thought about all the ways he had fucked up trying to learn to code.

**10/31/2021**

My wherewithal for human kindness and connection is very much dampened. Muffled up by stress and THC and alcohol as I mitigate my poorly ordered stresses. As I try and switch my dresses. Seek as my soul confesses

**10/28/2021**

And perhaps the proof was in the pudding

Got tired of seeing 10% and feeling like I was seeing 110%

**10/24/2021**

He pours the next whisky all over the side of the child’s water glass. He’d just been able to slip outside and get stoned while his wife dried their elder daughter’s hair with a blow drier, giving him aural cover to slip out the back door. While he hits the chillum, he watches the younger daughter, the toddler enter the kitchen, crumble up a pre-packed cookie from on fo the three birthday parties over the weekend and then pick up his wife’s phone and then with surprisingly intuitive randomness access and starts swiping through her phone.

He is officially dad drunk, screwballing, and his left side is throbbing. His legs suddenly feel rubbery and he wonders if he’ll be hung over in the morning. And all was free and fun until he sudden felt very drunk and very sloppy and the walls kept creeping up on him, getting in his way. And the down pour coming on and day is completely saturated.

Sitting. Chilled by an open window in the half-light of the morning and the city, breathing its morn with its morning incessance.

I’ve gained some good ground. I have established distance with my family.

I think I have learned something about the authorial voice and am slowing warming up to authentically playing around with it.

Would I be well served lowering my THC, caffeine and alcohol intake and, you know, just seeing how it goes.

Depressed, distant. Everything compounding everything else.

Someday I won’t be in an existential crisis and that will be nice.

What are these trailing off thoughts, the addicts regrets.

Transition is difficult.

Stretching and bodily groundedness is a major part of the foundation of my coding.

Stretching is my foundation. Not writing.

9/21/2021

His sense of self had collapsed completely. He had given over to addictive habit, had tried to tie the addiction to concentrated work towards a new career and now he felt at loose ends. Unravelling.

Was he holding the pen looser in his hand now? He had just masterbated with the same right hand, using that hand to fondle his penis and his testickles and pressing the center of his pelvis, the part of his body he loved to press against her flat area between her pubic hair and belly.

The smoking made the writing automatic. So throughout the fall and into the winter and to the neglect of his coding he smoked and wrote like he was trying to out run a pack of fiends devils brandishing pitch forks.

He was now working well and he felt like he could finally write about the abortion. Perhaps not well, but at least a bit more directly and he could let his thoughts clear and settle and let the path before him settle and straighten.

He felt fucking lost, but also, maybe strangely, maybe insanely, more convicted than ever that coding and writing were the way forward.

9/12/2021

Two beers in and I suddenly feel like social media is a great idea. Like most writerly types I fancy myself much more articulate after a few drafts.

9/8/2021

Simultaneously trying to learn a new skill set (uphack myself to a better work/life/creation/life balance), a technical skill et to change careers, write in a more nourishingly way, ground myself in my identify with my family, overcome my lazy dependency on alcohol and caffeine and THC.

Struggling with this desire/longing/need to connect/settle/be cool.

Direty, word white tennis shoes, the puffy, padded, geeric kind that elderly people wear pristinely but some poor alcoholic middle aged people will where worn down and dirty white, with spits and cracks in the rubber. The kind of shoes you where when you are poor and waiting in lines and feeling tired and sick and hungover or in withdrawl. Soned and quiet. Stoned and fragmented. Why am I such a poor listener. Acquirring style requires trying things and winnowing.

**02/24/2021**

Busted. Perhaps now with my wife’s condemnation fresh in my ears I can leverage this to a hard quit. Seems like the perfect time to showcase my solid self-control and habitual panche.

The drugs don’t work they only make it worse. Deeper into Faerie. Fair enough.

Arriving at a blessed place, I put don’t roots. In this blessed place beside the river.

Feel compelled to hid my writing under my coding notes. Both so I can jot down ideas as and if they come up, but also because I feel guilty to be tacking time away from coding my stated mission, my reason for cloistering myself away from my family—my wife, my children. If it was some other boss demanding my time, stripping my time, it iswas okay, it was necessary, I out-sourced that decision making. If the worked sucked and was inconvenient we could leer at old man Razny for being such a mean and unreasonable cuss. Now all I could do was hate myself and seek ways to blunt to loathing as I sunk deeper into my self-isolation and study induced self-encapsulation.

But it was an unhealthy dichotomy, because coding was find, soulless, arbitrary coding was a completely defensible a salutary occupation, but pursuing my soul work, my engaged writing, my soul strip mining attempt to take control and come into my own in my craft my actual vocation seemed like something too shameful, too indulgent, too unearned, too on credit, too unrealistic, if I have not transformed into a fully formed writer by now then when, if ever?

But the proof was in the pudding, no? The writing was healing me. I was getting stronger and more settled. I was making progress with coding despite myself, despite my breaks and breakdowns, distractions and meanderings. I was habituating the things that I was learning and I was feeling more and more confident that a career in the tech sector was both viable, but also desirable. That it fit with my way or working, or my potential way of working. I just had to give it time. I just had to keep making the effort. Following the intuition. Writing. Editing. Layering. Compiling. Composing.

Or am I simply just a burnt-out never quite fully formed creative with a smattering of skills that fail to add up to the sum of their parts. This is a pretty sad summary compared with being a rejuvenated professional jumping into the tech world with the pep and vigor of an over eager adult learner. A mind prepped for this adventure by years of language study and a solid liberal arts back ground that set me up well to be a life-long learner.

And it is hard to talk about the now—because the now keeps changing, but my now, now, at least feels like it has some good track lain. There’s some blasting that needs to be done just ahead. Some tunneling too, before we can bring the locomotive through.

Ever new, protean, weather-like, amorphous, hardened, then suddenly soft, sunlight in cold, cool breeze in heat.

I can either despair at all of these expanding projects or I can celebrate the continued ambition and expansion of my soul.

Weed and solfeggio frequencies put me a world away.

And then to do this without drugs—to do this without drink—to do this with my body laid out on an alter—weakened with a dagger through my spleen—myth of man—mother myth of love, of the purity of old women’s worry. Are these strategic worries or just static.

02/24/2021

Betsy is trying to martial the girls out the door. Esme is protesting – she doesn’t want to wear new boots from cousin, but her old boots which are too small for her and hurt her feet. Though they don’t actually hurt her feet, but she said that they did the other day so that she could convince betsy to take the ‘el’ train home instead of having her walk. Her toe had hurt so badly she had said that that they just absolutely had to take the train back home from preschool. Esme, you sobbed on the sidewalk and said you couldn’t take another step forward.

Can you help facilitate a little—I am facing the wall playing guitar, happily deconstructing a B chord—feeling music freer and more immediate than at any other time in the previous 4 decades. Something has opened in me, some faculty has quickened or developed or something else something else in me stepped aside, retired.

Don’t confuse the ritual for the reward.

And I was sick and I finally went straight on the 24th of February, 2021. At last, at last returning to the source.

Vidar finally stepped up, as Floyd finally stepped aside.

Mistakes are one’s proof of agency.

Focus, plan, timeliness, networking, projects, lectures, talks, forums, open houses, get groomed, come out, get real sober, radically sober, extremely sober,

Don’t lay back, don’t bask, don’t wallow.

A healthy stream never basks, a healthy stream never wallows.

And so now, I decided, then and there at 1356 on 2/24/2021, the fine Wednesday that it was, to proceed ahead full sober and settled. Good things were certainly in store. Sober sailing would lead me to new shores. My habits would always be there for me if I really needed them. We’ll call it a 4 day holiday—feel free to write or mediate or whatever you need.

***I’m feeling needy and obsessive when it comes to music. I am feeling needy and obsessive when it comes to writing. I am feeling needy and obsessive when it comes to programming. I think I must be doing something right.***

The post office had been lost. They were both now on their own independent and mutually exclusive and esoteric head trip—but at least they were both being honest about it.

**02/23/2021**

Such adorable children and a goodly amount of legal drugs to make sure they get the appreciation that they deserve.

A day began smoking is a commitment to keep it up the whole day or risk losing a lot of productivity.

Tech wants to serve the writing; writing wants to serve the tech.

**02/08/2021**

My wife is not happy with me about writing. I continue to write when she goes out and I have Helena watch a video. When she comes back Helena is still watching a video and I am still writing and my wife is annoyed with me and I can’t blame her. I am annoyed with me, I should be spending time with my daughter—I should be digging through programming notes and building out various web development projects. I should be reading Chinese and reading books in English and listening to podcast or watching shows or films or all that cool stuff on youtube or catching up with EVERYONE on social media and various frequently checked news sources or reading my magazines or reading to my girls, or doing the dishes or cleaning or

**02/01/2021**

Selfish sex in the morning. Getting off easy.

Cum on the sheets.

Then feel sad in the morning

Upset in your gut

Killing time till you go to faerie.

The finished works, rounded curves

Duplicated missions, loping sorties

Strangled lines, lies

Pulling your shit together each dawn

Transcending self—dip so deeply down

That you implode in an act of infinite recursion.

I’ve been here before, I’ve been here before, I’ve been

Its either my homecoming or my ultimate undoing.

Spooning with the devil to keep the chill out all night

Spooning with the devil to keep the woodman in line.

Spooning with the devil to move on down the line.

Pining for my mother’s love from another time.

Father in his middle miles

Moving further down the line.

**01/29/2021**

Inattentive—

Scraped a layer of middle finger off.

Poor timing exiting the kitchen on to the porch and trailing my hand behind to close the door.

Lost in thought? I don’t know. Floppy. Floating. Careless.

**01/28/2021**

In the telling our enthusiasm for the story all but ceased.

Modern life is a sort of Madness. Very much a virtual reality. Once augmented to it—all our needs are met, our needs are met in their time, many days not even leaving the apartment. January harder than February because of February still being after January.

**01/22/2021**

Mood Swings, depression, feelings of anxiety, frustration, agitation.

Triggers of poor mental health:

* Self-esteem
* Not disciplined enough
* Not smart enough
* Not organized enough
* Perceived judgement
* Projected national tumult on relationship
* Lies of Trump
* Lies of Lance Armstrong

01/07/2021

**Vicious loop or not writing and not connecting**

Want to connect with people

Want to connect through writing

Conflicted about writing

Don’t write

Don’t connect

Will connect and write!!

Alcohol in veins, suddenly shit to say.

Now I am bloated and chemically crashed,

Drowsy and eye-stained, back strung, pre-emptively hungover

1/05/2021

I’ll spend your money

I’ll drink your wine

I’ll spell out my name in cigarettes and knives.

You can Make my name in smoke screens and lies.

Writing away through the afternoon,

nothing to gain from staying the same,

suppose it was time for a change.

12/26/2020

I have to learn to write like this without cannabis—there is such a freedom in this—a pouring forth into the river or ideas and experience—no longer squeezing overlapping, compressing for spontaneous expression, simply relaxing, letting settle, and seeing what just might bubble up.

Giving yourself over to the desperate thoughts.

The multitudes of Wittman.

Man, myth, legend, grandiose writer god extraordinaire,

The stone Monkey who would take on heaven.

Daring fully monkey wild to snatch a peach in his passing.

Waiting for the deluge of Covid literature.

01/04/2020

Feeling fragmented by my THC consumption. Need to stop now. Everything just a little off.

12/23/2020

I’ve been thinking in such ramshackle structures and systems for so long that I can not longer hope to differentiate the wisdom from the bullshit.

Wounded, alcoholic, career anxiety, physical challenges, economic worries, battling cycles of crippling self-doubt and self-recrimination.

Do you feel threatened or uncomfortable when confronted by people you do not understand?

Don’t believe I am in your target audience.

05MAY 2016

I can’t speak for you, but I am not a big fan of myself.

I am neither as compassionate or arrogant as I would like to be.

And if not talented, at least deadly effective?

And if not deadly effective then at least productive.

And if not productive then at least blindingly busy.

02APRIL2020

* reading iii:
* **q: Where to?**
* m: Queen of Pentacles
* f: Seven of Cups (reversed)
* =: Two of Swords (reversed)
* m: Queen of Pentacles
* Security, liberty is all on the table. The offer has been made. You can either choose to accept it or reject it. 丰富盛意都等你。已经提供了。接受拒绝就看你。
* f: Seven of Cups (reversed)
* Terrifying. Twilight zone. Monochromatic 50s existentialism. 7 different offerings. The snake, the resurrected Christ. The face that launched 1000 ships, Phallus fort security, riches and treasures, achievements and commendations, fowl fate and disaster. A decision or a game of chance is at hand. You dear Querent are the pawn in play. Please step ahead.
* Fairy favors and images of reflection. Imagination and sentiment. Contemplation can lead you into this gambit. Consider and choose. You have the will and determination to complete your project. Keep grinding at it and find updated ways of working along the way. “The Three Languages”- the son learns useless knowledge (language of dogs, frogs and birds). His father banishes him, but he walks into opportunity and success at every step due to his years of study and knowledge. At the end of the story he still is unsure about how to proceed, but the doves are with him whispering the mass into his ears.
* 精卫鸟和女娃- 决心，重新支持
* 坚持就能胜利。
* =: Two of Swords (reversed)
* If I can persevere and bring my heart and mouth in line I can step into harmony with my life. With my wife. She kneels blindfolded and trusting to follow where I lead. But instead she is suspended as the hanging man. Caught in limbo, trusting, but running into my imposture, falsehood, duplicity, and disloyalty. The moon weighs me down and the night defeats me with each rise. I take flight, but am ultimately ground down. Binding my mind to false habits inhibits me from full embracing my body and the body of my writing, I am too cerebral and my senses overcome my sense. My appetites overcome my emotional acuity. If I can unite my heart into just one will, I can succeed, step forward and accept the bounty of her love and intimacy.
* The hoodwinked figure has already committed to trust and be faithful. Will you do the same?

“Into her arms.”

**02APRIL2020**

There is something in this family that is off. That is blown. That is sidestepped. That is thrown out-of-whack. The memory heartdrive had me fitted and flat. Sitting in the carpack, smoking out back. Quack goes the duck, with any luck we’ll have the whole flock bagged by sunup. Things are looking up. Unless you’re not are a duck I suppose. It all hinges on perspective.

Battling back… battling back against the black. She won’t let me become that thing that I don’t want to become. She won’t let me fall apart. Falling into the abyss of my bad habits. She helped me right the ship. I can step forward with the understanding that I can do this. I can transform in this month. I will transform this month and I will feel good about it.

**06APRIL2020**

And this is the horror…that it won’t get better. That I will wake up everyday for the rest of my life and feel this incomplete task looming over me. And just by being, I will be failing. Just be existing I will be fucking up because I still haven’t found my task. I still haven’t figured out my personal economy.

I am on the right track though. Who can say I am not on the right track? I have a vision. I have a vision to be a writer and a translator and regardless if that comes to full fruition, the vision itself still has some gas. The vision itself can center me and expel my anxious energy, channel it into something that I can mold over time. Something that I can throw ahead of me and regard as a mirror, allowing me to see back through the season.

Why would you judge the shit out of that pastor? I suppose because he is from the south and protestant and likely pretty conservative in his politics.

We can question the politics at hand. The fact that countries are doing it all over the world tells me something. Is the story they are not telling us with Sweden is that they have way fewer citizens with preexisting conditions and they have a well-funded Socialized healthcare system that should be able to handle the surge?

Why haven’t I read any more Joseph Stiglitz since I did my degree at Valparaiso (10 years ago…That’s right I graduated from Valparaiso almost exactly 10 years ago and in the last decade I have built a resume around selling luxury watches. My wife and I have had two girls. I continue to struggle to find a long arching working rhythm and instead find myself in this cycle of initiatives that flare up and fade away. I am fragmented and inconsistent. I could blame my pot smoking. I could blame my drinking. I think we have moved passed that now as a big blocking factor. I hope. I am hopeful. I feel so closed in on today. But not smothered. Just sort of held in. Contained.

I woke up yesterday, early, with a little fire in my mind. I was hungover from my antics the previous two days of getting stoned and pissing betsy off the previous night and day drinking and getting slurry the next night. Not running has definitely played a part in that. I allowed myself to slink into this inaccessible place. This place where I had a layer of pain and a layer of chemical buffer to keep me from engaging with the world around me. And I don’t see the point of that, unless the point is to close out the world so I can concentrate on this task at hand. Chinese, writing, coding. I don’t have to be great. I don’t. I just have to be engaged and good.

If everything is ultimately ones and zeros, then today I am a zero. I have to work to get back to being a one.

An ecstatic vision of our country. A rambling act of discovery. What I ultimately found was kicks. And alcoholism. There are other ways to be you know? There are more than ones more than zeros.

Mark this day. A day that I didn’t get up quite as early as I had wanted to. A day that I am still feeling a little concussed. Like something has been removed from my brain.

I feel low today, but it is a sort of a consolidated low. Feels settled. Set. Unlikely to go lower. Unlikely to sink deeper. The self-loathing comes at me in a resigned manner. I feel very resigned this morning. I didn’t get up as early as I wanted to and I don’t feel a zing of production and I don’t feel a zing of inspiration. This is a good place to be though. I need to write into this. If this is where my writing leaves me then fantastic! Let’s walk away from this quasi writing as life-style situation if this is where is lands us. Let us take up gaming and pulp fiction. I feel so fragmented that I can’t even get through a pulp fiction novel in a timely fashion. In the interim I start studying Tarot and reading a dozen other fragments of books. Trying to find some kind of perch that I can express from.

The process of adding, dropping, cultivating ideas strikes me as a good one. I like the idea of being able to build something over time, but I am terrified that I will never find the consistency of being to keep the production going over that period of time to allow the material to evolve and mature and for my writing to evolve and mature. I have to love the process or it is just not worth it.

My latest stab, plead is for writing to be the vessel to guide me out of this closed canyon of excess substance use. I have been using alcohol and marijuana to the extent that it has been damaging my relationship with my wife. She has responded with hurt and frustration, but ultimately loves and accepts me and has not rejected me for it, despite the fact that I have been sneaky and less-than-forthcoming and at the expense of my sleep and health.

Some sort of sad facsimile of culture.

The sad thing about a lot of people’s soul writing is that it is really terrible. It is really stilted. It is really broken and shattered and all of their problems have not conspired to make them great writers. I don’t want my writing to be driven by my problems.

I could be in this same exact situation, easily, but with two hours ahead of me. I could be in this space with a coffee in hand and relaxing music playing. What an elevated existence that would be. Music, coffee, writing in English. What a European I am. Hacking away at my wound.

I could be in this same exact situation, but with two hours ahead of me… but… I felt like I needed to slip in a few sneaky beers and some whisky shots and got myself slurry and pissed my wife off and slept poorly and woke early and got high to try to balance it all out and spent the rest of the day feeling hung over and separate from myself. It was all I cold do to just get through a few pages of my Fantasy novel before I passed out on the couch… oh, did that feel good. And then I slept well and slept in and though I missed my chance to get some writing in, I now have a chance to begin again. Again, again, the phoenix again.

We have tasted the waters and the waters of the world are pure.

We have tasted the waters and the waters of the world are poison.

I need to read more Wittman. Emerson liked Wittman, of course he did. What was this wild cresting of energy and expression in the Victorian age? What was this wild expression of positivity and optimism in the Victorian Age? Where is that now? Where has the baseline gone? You cannot escape your time. You can try and escape your time, but you cannot escape your time. And a lot of the time I feel like I would be better served just reading more and writing not at all. Why can’t I just get up and read? Why can’t I just get up and sip coffee and read. That is a good feeling. That is a feeling that I want to preserve over time. I don’t want to be a ghost in my own household. I do want to have these things hard fought for. I do want these things to be pursued and pulled down. And if, when we are finally, the two of us, on the Savanna floor, predator and object of desire, will I regret the dusty miles I tread to embrace you here in the mud and blood or the day. Or will I hold your delicate neck trembling, my weathered fangs jagged from my many missed marks. Will I bath in the fount of your blood and be renewed?

My brother’s Catholicism is not very inspiring. Skeptical, but not in an actionable way. Skeptical in a something is not quite right here sort of way or I don’t like it or I don’t get it or I don’t have all the information. I am more apt to fall back on the non-expert argument, which does seem sort of passive, but are we not in the same boat, actionably? You have decided to be pissed off about it and I have decided to refrain judgement until it plays out a bit more. Typical agnostic I suppose. Hedging my bets.

I was hungover when I spoke to my Catholic brother and I should just not be hungover any more. It just fucks up your whole day. When Marcus and I had our late night. I felt pretty off most of the day, but was still able to get up and out and run a very solid 8K. I hadn’t smoked pot in over a month at that point… I’m just saying.

That said, everything is pointing to getting my drinking and my smoking in order. Really limiting it. Social distancing from it. The less access I have the more I will be able to

I think the problem with my taskbar is that I am always writing right at the bottom of the screen. I suppose I just need to keep my writing closer to the top of the screen and that will solve that issue.

I can’t take away the number of yellow pages I knocked out yesterday. If I can get through this month with 80 miles ran, all of those yellow pages brought out into the light of day and a few writing projects coming together, then I will not have too much to complain about. Also finishing diamond essentials. Also finishing my Ruby course.

I have an ability to strip everything away and return to some sort of primordial state. How can I articulate what this state is. I am not saying that it is an advantage, but it has its advantages. What is this mindframe… this framing of the mind that says we have advantages and disadvantages. For what? To figure what out? How could my collapse to zero be anything but negative. How can the withering away of my systems and projects be anything but proof of an undisciplined mind. We know these things. We hear these things and we think we understand them, but we do not until we actually live them.

Who is the Chinese philosopher that raised action above all else? He said something like there is only action. There is only action and nothing else.

Chinese language jobs at FTC… other governmental organizations…

[R.B. Bate- “Treastie on the Kaleidoscope (1819)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaleidoscope)

[Form Constant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_constant)- repeated patterns that show up in hallucinations be it medically or chemically catalyzed.

The sun today imbues this day with a brilliance and hope I had not expected! I don’t even want to get high or drunk today. I plan on getting a couple miles in, perhaps in combination with a bike trek. I started this morning feeling low and writing with a flaccid pen. I started this morning feeling feeling overwhelmed by my dissipated mind. I began this morning feeling disappointed that I did not begin this morning early enough. I did not begin this morning with coffee made. I did not begin this morning with a vision for what the day would be. I felt reactive and stuck in the mud of my mind. Not creative. Not a well of fire. Where is the well of fire? Where is the overriding faith that this momentum is moving you in the right direction.

How can you be interested in things- all things almost- and not become overwhelmed by your mediocrity at all things. Our economy rewards specialization. I ain’t that special. Do I despair or do I keep on pushing? You push. Of course, you push… you’re a Victorian.

**07APRIL2020**

Midnight stretching- yes! That is how I should use pot. Morning. Night. Not during the day. I don’t need pot to make me a good conversationalist. In fact, I know it makes me a fragmented conversationalist and makes my memory poor. I want to get the cake and eat it too. So yes stretch. Move your body in all of the ways that it can be moved. Be a good example for your daughter of physical self-care and health.

Use mirrors. Use mirrors and cameras to get over yourself. To improve the way that you present yourself. It could be good listening practice to be able to see someone speak Chinese with more frequency. Sit by open windows whe the breeze comes in from across the sea, warm Caribbean wind cooled as it approaches from across the lake.

And the bodys passed under the water in clear caskets. Everything was tinted read. I called to you and you responded with tinself words and the stars twinkled in approval. You did not have you final say. You did not say anything final. You were too caught up in typing. Putting words into the computer that you would perhaps never see again. I will not be long. I will not be here long.

Muttering of talisman and symbols. All of the people are poets with their symbols emblazoned before them. Sports teams. Colleges. Learning, status, meaning, tradition, history, time. Time passed. Time moved on from. I have moved on from time and we make a special dispensation for that which you have spoken of. And this shit just feels blocked. I have this piece that I am trying to edit through and even as I consider doing that I have this other ting that I am typing. I should really just edit through these for a fixed amount of time and then jump into doing some kind of creative writing where I first meditate and try to bubble up, bubble up all of the things that I have been reading about and thinking about and see if I can’t find some new ground. I am not falling apart here. I am pulling everything together.

I try not to have top fives… but why. Is that because of my depression, or just the way my brain is wired that the things I like loss their luster the more I hang on to them?

Can’t I just write letters and ramble at people, or am I worried that writing about our comings and goingsm our small trials and tribulations, just living, will somehow expose my narcissistic existence?

It’s all right to be tired.

It’s all right to want to sleep.

To feel disappointed that your good college friend came to town and couldn’t fit you in.

How do I deal with still feeling like the hurt kid that doesn’t fit in.

*A desire burns to transcend myself.*

*My cheap drug habits*

*Find a rhythm in this writing.*

*Really write. Write until right.*

*Until these wrongs become correct.*

My father goes running and leaves me with a babysitter that he doesn’t have to pay for, who is available, but perhaps not trustworthy, opening me up to being sexually molested.

Rain channeled through the grooves between the weathered marble paving stone.

Thought I was strong, but fell apart at the first sign of a fight.

I sneezed on my sleeve.

I sneezed into my sleeve.

Staying sober is a theme. Not writing stoned and drunk all the time is the theme. Appraising all of this with a sober mind. Looking for continuity. Looking for consistency. Looking for a rhythm that I can maintain. Crossing the ocean aided by the currents.

I am not naturally very emotive nor do I feel like I draw people out of themselves. A big part of that has to be the pot smoking. I am digging myself into a hole with the THC addiction. I am getting to the point where if I am going to be me and not engaged in some kind of work or objective task type activity, then I have to be stoned.

I want to believe that if I can just use this spreadsheet every day, I will have a better handle on my life. I don’t want to be out of control. I feel out-of-control or at least set on a certain trajectory. That anxiety one feels when you can’t seem to shake your anxiety. I can write myself out of this if I work hard to write myself out of this.

Let’s recall that at the end of month 2 of {run, code, run} I was getting 50ish miles in a month in. I had changed jobs. I ewas completing an on-line course… and then the Patek Training threw me off track and right around there I also got some weed from Sky. I don’t think I had been smoking at all. That was spring 2018… had the wherewithal to switch jobs.

I am a carbon copy of your worst enemy.

Lester Montgomery memory me.

I want flow.

I want to flow.

I’m a rubix cube forever.

I’m a late reply.

Deranged by sadness, madness, super stone serendipity.

Remember that play is the most unconscious form of expression. Let’s hear it for unconscious play. A year ago I wrote a letter to Erik. This ghost friend echoing in my head. I need to write. I keep coming back to it, but I do need to write. I remember it feeling comfortable to write in my daughter’s play area. More calls from the past to put a fast on smoking, put a fast on drinking. You are half relationships. You and expression. Others and ears.

08/01/2020

Momentary lapse into the sewers of my past.

Looking back and hating the fuck out of my writing, out of myself. Not being able to approach the wound (I met a man wounded in hatred). Approach the throne. Worship with an open heart.

How have politics poisoned this space— every story so compelling. Dumb and sullen in the eve of your imagination.

Becoming nothing, yet striving for something. Becoming nothing (where none is the number). But am becoming. Have you seen the improvement since you chose one path instead of many?

Sweet August burst forth with a hoppy thirst

Great vines, funeral procession, hearse, ambulance driven, popular culture vulture, making your money, seeing what is on the table, learning to learn, flattening the curve, getting back your verve, taking some nerve, looking before you swerve, murdering most fondly. Drooly expound on any half profound point that strikes you. Seeing 10% and feeling like you were seeing 100%

What’s my point? What is my mission? My 1st volition? A fever dream? A premonition. A vision of life beyond the smallness of my suburban bobble store existence.

Without a clear framework she is simply raw expression, emotion without form, freedom without vision… almost wrote desire… but what if is desire without vision, but lust? Vision combines desire with responsibility and community and family. I have a vision of developing highly in demand skills and building a career in tech and software and content management and web development.

Why can’t I finish letters I wonder?

I want to sneak away to smoke and then I do.

8/2/2020

Am I more likely to write sad things with cursive or printing? So here I am breaking my promise and not even deeply stoned, just set apart and selfish, but writing. I need to recalibrate. I know I am not being healthy. It’s like not that the other aspects of my life are in good shape. I have to run my health down. That is possibly true, but you have also just completely stopped exercising outside of taking walks with your daughters. I have addressed this as being part of my effort to really pair down my activities to focus on coding, but that is also kind of weird, because before my shoulder issue, integrating calisthenics into my daily study routine was really important and seemed to be driving some good effort and good health practices.

I can write on Sunday and on Sunday we write. And what I write by hand in this book is my first draft— always my 1st draft— but something that I will return to and rescue from the fate of most of my first draft efforts— collecting dust in unread notebooks. My thoughts discarded. Barfed up and spirited away to the top shelf in the study, old efforts in spiral notebooks of various colors all in an impenetrable row. Or invisible away somewhere on my hard drive categorized by all the years gone by, squirrelled away in digital crannies and digital nooks.

I like to begin an idea on paper. The tactile experience of fingers on the pen.

On an island now— a pen, a notebook, a laptop; tools to create any number of things.

But I don’t want to write about myself exclusively. I want to use writing to heal, but don’t quite believe in purging emotions as an ultimate solution for mitigating the deleterious affects on one’s life. I’m not sure if that is entirely true though. I think I do believe in the purging of emtions as being a big part of the cure. I think I do believe that purging is part of the cure. Downtown drunks being downtown drunks.

I am drinking too fast and too much. Knocking back those two beers on the walk with Helena seems sad. Betsy catching me smoking week weed in the morning and she thinks that’s sad. I am embarrassed and I am not embarrassed.

Figuring out your principles seems important. You know how you will act. You can have vision at that point because while you do not know the particulars of the path, but you do know the messages that you will need to send. I feel like my hybrid style isn’t so deranged. The other style is too young. Too caught in formation. I have not been developing in a bubble and I wouldn’t say some baroque style has captured my imagination

9/17/2020

Stopped smoking during the day today… making that investment.

Expressing your deepest depths, and yet always a performer. In the bed and out of the bed, our metaphors and intentions folding over one another, as we release, as we forget, as we forgive, and make no mistake, I am so grateful, so humbled by your commitment.

I have been suffering in a way that I can’t quite express— and I have been blocked from expressing it because of spiritual exhaustion. I think my retail life was literally sucking the life out of me. Without a clear path to a more fulfilling, but at least equally secure, stable, rewarding job I began to despair that I did not have the wherewithal to pursue and develop other aspects of my life (including the vocational skills that could transport me to a new lane of possibilities) that were not this unfulfilling job and not my parental or spousal responsibilities.

My mother’s vocation was a struggle. She often resented it and did not hide that resentment from us. Vocally expressing regret that she had not had time to develop as a person before jumping into her career and child rearing. To some extent she took this out on us. She took this out on herself with her manic overcommitment and perpetually stressed out responses to things. My mother was often not super fun to be around because she was so stressed. And being around mom was often about hearing about her stress or listening to her process through something that was stressing her out.

He unhinged and unmitigated analyzing of things is a skill and a curse. All of these realities have two sides. From the opulence and its imagine absence we have access to poverty and deprivation.

My daughter comes in to show me something and my blood boils— I am out of the silence— was I even in it? And there is the dragon, slithering into the mist— black, evils, forest of the nights. And somewhere deep in the thickets beneath the behemoth blackwoods a caravan at the foot of a craggy rise—

10/07/2020

Lowkey debauchery, rampant and incessant mediocrity. An average Joe in every way. So average he is some sort of mythological figure of averageness. There are more of me than there are of you so just show me when to vote and we’ll see how it goes at the poles.

an object or undertaking regarded by the speaker as unpleasant or badly made or carried out.

And perhaps I am in an inescapable cycle of mental imbalance. What if I forever have a compulsive thrist for alcohol and THC? Sure that is one reality. One dimension. In another I dies today. Heart attack at 41 all messed up cause I never could quite get free.

Bedlam

From their grey sheeted sick beds my furies howl.

Their words reach me with the warm vomit curled tang of rotten dogbreath. My achilles has been healing though. I’ve been finding my stride again. I have been chasing the right silence. Cool Alpine winds. A glass walled writing cabin on the highest peak. A desk. A breeze. Silence gathered, stroked, pregnate and bursting forth. The perfume of the new redolent in his words. And possibility- the burnt cache of my frustrated info grab flushed out and a fresh go round of renewal can be realized. We must forever be renewing. The moon. The seasons. Nature. Do not fear this flux, engage, it honesty and openly, full sensed. Unfurling, unfurling, collapsing here with you.

11/02/2020

He protests a bit too much about not being a consumer. She’s quite and gardens and crochets intricate hats for the babies that bloom into being is some proximity.

* Am I on the spectrum?
* Do I have BPD?
* Am I a drug addict?
* An alcoholic?
* Overly-dramatic?
* Overly self-analytic?
* Mommy issues?
* Daddy issues?
* My parents once alluded to me possibly being molested as a child. Or at the very least have left me in the care of a convicted child molester.
* I was kind of molested by Austin. It was just pretty innocent kids stuff, though I wonder if he has struggled with sexual identity issues.
* Is it my crippling depression?
* Do I have childhood lore too dark to explore.
* Right mindfulness… right mindedness is moment to moment presence, developed through awareness of the body, feeling and the workings and content of the mind
* Right concetraion is one-pointed attention leading to ever higher stages of neditation absortption, illuminating in bliss.
* Not a Catholic
* Unsaved soul
* Lacking a clear vocation
* Lacking salient talent
* All energy or paralyzed stasis- manic
* Too independent == selfish
* Daddy issues
* Mommy issues
* An empath
* Writer’s block
* Not humble enough
* Not enough confidence
* Hadn’t acquired enough good habits to be an artist— positive (or negative harnessing) energy habits.
  + Rooting out bad stress
  + Beginning from a healthy place of love
  + Feeling limber in body and mind.
  + Locking in may allow to speed through the completion of one soul shattering, reality altering embarrassing, romancing work, but then you end up like a jerk, sad and old and creatively spent— you had the Qi but you never learned to harness it well— never made a life-enhancing practice out of it— found solace in the work— not as a task, but as an existence— being the moon in it, waxing and waning life energy from your body. Truly writing from your belly. Tapping into the power in your organs to do the good work you need to sustain life and joy in the practice of your life.

I knew how to think and dream, though just day to day living was a lot less intuitive.

11/03/2020

Getting my reward, sweat reward and special feling in the afternoon with my legs too long— chuckling, deranged, nervous and shaking. I am all that I am and nothing more. Cynical, drunk, and depressed, nostalgia is a helluva drug.

A plant unable to live according to its nature dies.

11/08/2020

Did a vlog this weekend about ways to deal with the petite anxieties of life or even worse the sharp ungrounded or out of proportion self-recriminating thoughts that can beat you down and bleed the connection and concentrated engagement and open joy of the task as hand. Its all about moving beyond the messages of fear. Fear of ideas. Other Cultures. Religions. Where should I begin? My Garden of Eden fever dream? My mother preached fear. Put me to bed with *This Present Darkness* and sent me off to a weird one roomed Christian school in a soon to be condemned annex of a local Catholic diocese. Little did our little utopia know, but it was lousy with asbestos. Fear and Conservatism. Rush Limbaugh. The Gays. The Lesbians. The Fema-nazis, the Sex-ed propaganda, the easy access to condums, lets just ignore that as these programs have evolved the numbers of teen pregnancies and the number of abortions have gone down significantly.

I am often overrun my thoughts— inchoate, layered, often unordered

11/09/2020

I went around and notated where the 2 #insert candidate’s name signs were in my Neighbrohood!! Now I know where my enemy lives and eats.

Dems don’t create, all they understand is Burn-Loot-Murder

I am grieving my mother— the distance, the separation, her eventually, inevitable earthly departure, and mine as well.

How do you balance tender love that makes you vulnerable with sufficient independence and stability? Vulnerable, but solid.

The Seven-Teen-Year locust. I was very young and could write reasonably okay, but I had zero discipline or focus and no runaway inspiration to buckle down and do the long work and middle miles necessary for solid, consistent, maintainable, agile writing.

11/14/2020

Stagnate, a bad actor, a dabbler in magic and corn-fed jokes, a stutter boy, a suck boy, tragic really, flailing around so pensively, a standard issue hypocrite.

Somewhat convinced that this is a new sort of madness— a down the rabbit hole escape from my deadend existence. And yet, and again— something else, something committed to, something unfurling. My crystalline exhilaration. An addict’s logic, a strangled confession just before you fall our of love. Angry reunions with phantasms from your forest floor. The bottom of your well. The creases of your mind where some hot pepper thought got folded up and forgotten— been slowly burning its way back to your attention ever since.

Brain completely scattered, but somehow victorious.

Halloween night smoking weed and eating it. Full moon Ides and 8. Up all night doing. Yoga. Baby wakes early in the morning and we watch the full moon set and the sun rise on All Saint’s morning. Older daughter sneaking down the basement stairs to eat candy. Narrator sneaking weed bursts, showers, clothes changing, teeth brushing, visine contingencies of where to smoke and what depending on where narrator’s wife is. She’s carrying all the weight. He is off to neverland with Joseph Campbell and Yeats and Dylan and James Joyce and Walter Benjamin and Liu Ci Xin and Jin yong and the Buddha and Confuscions and Christ and the Mormons selling us real real estate in the way out wild beyond.

And I write and rewrite the note to my brother deeply disliking my handwriting.

11/16/2020

I have slept in dorms, on a ship, in cabins, in tents, abroad, abreast, slept some places my memory has suppressed behind the looking glass.

Begins to doubt memory, starts speaking to the dead.

Feeling better, but becoming alienated from family. Is he crazy to feel so rejected?

Picking up toys in the living room, I put the trains where I know they don’t go because I don’t know where the train set box is and I am creating a random pile after dismantling the rats nest in the cushion fort I have just taken apart.

“The trains probably should go with the train set,” she says in a tired way— I am adding to her burdens. The one lone adult who should be lightening her load, but instead is heaping weight upon her. I am an ass. I am unhelpful. I am hindering her from realizing happiness.

Domestic squabbles, sacrifice sucking it up for each other, seeing from one another’s perspective.

Tired, stoned, tried to write. Losing the fight. Goodnight.

He was an idiot. He endeavored to be a disciplined idiot, but he was still an idiot and their was no escaping that at all…

11/19/2020

The Yoga Addict.

Yoga Addict.

Yoga/Addict

The Yoga Fanatic

* Exhaused mom, strung out Yoga dad chasing god and writing and language both human and computer. (11/19/2020)

The desert and the blooming flower

You got drunk and stone last night and now you’re stone before 7:00 a.m. on a Thursday and it’s the grandest thing. Let your weakness be your strength. Doing the disgusting thing. The stupid thing. The irrational thing. The uncool thing. The lonely thing. The retreating thing. The egoless thing. The egotistical thing.

Don’t be afraid of the insanity it stirs in you sometime, for too there is an equal and even more robust portion of good sense and effort and steadiness. This bifurcated existence. Riding on multiple levels at once.

I am fine with a limited life. I want to be fine with a limited life. I have just wanted to be in a position where I can work and I am engaged with work and I have a vision for my work and study. I am fine with attempting to wallow hard and lyrical at some far off investment.

Inspired by a self-organizing life aim that stimulates goals.

11/20/2020

Depressed, off track, fatty, slouched and unfulfilled.

Retching over my American Standard

Compelled by the stench of rotting tomatoes

In late summer forgotten book bag

Discovered just in time for school

Stink juice into the garage sale rug

The dark wool one with the already dank

Musky oder, worn and roughed up at the edge.

The Chinese are just like the Americans only moreso.

02/08/2021

Front row seats to my wife’s unraveling psyche as the one year old and 5 year old slowly, but surely wear her down to threads of her former robust sinews.

I pause to shout at the girls to stop rattling the door and trying to get into the bedroom. Just because you feel scattered and run down doesn’t mean that I have to. Or do I? I though you were signing off. She hadn’t sad anything, but had simply perched on the edge of the couch in a chilling cessation of activity. She wasn’t engaged in anything or doing a project. She must be upset. And so I should be upset? She is stressed. So I should be stressed? She is distracted and fragmented. So I should be distracted and fragmented. She is mad and depressed. Should I be made and depressed, because it is hard to concentrate when you are made and depressed. I talk to my family and they are made and depressed as well and seem to want to make sure I am made and depressed to, pushing me when I say that I am voting for a new president after the incumbent had done an unsatisfactory job and that was it my mother had wanted to know. An unsatisfactory job? There must be a deeper reason. She seemed disoriented like the red-herring unraveling of Lost’s not with a bang but a whimper series ending. Never actually saw it, but so I had heard. Heard my mom speak in hushed tones about all the hidden meaning in the show. Family had liked show because one of the actors was originally from Newberry, the family seat. My aunt worked at the longterm care facitility where the actors mother stayed as the head administrator. The actor and his family were very kind and gracious and deeply appreciated the care provided to the elderly woman in the comfort of her hometown of Newberry, Michigan.

There is no way that this can come across as anything other than melodramatic but I am beginning to conceive of October 2020 as the formalizing of my EXILE/MY HOMECOMING. Firmly and finally leaving the home of my father. The home of my mother. The ideological home. The physical homeland. Firmly and finally rejecting (re:rejecting) their America and entering finally, in some, explicitly claiming mine. Ours. The future. Hope. A certain outlook and perspective. All of this is metaphor and shadow. Image and connotation. A grye. A flushing toilet. The flagging swirling in contradictory eddies. The shadow play of political theater, political rhetoric. Political rhetoric come catch phrase, phrase of thinking, contextualized transfiction. Believe fiction. Clung to facts. Blaming the windmills in Texas for power outages with a “Shame on you for doubting big oil sort of snarl” (Isreal concurrently has oil slicks affecting 90% of its beaches … 90% after a massive tanker spill… with is apropos to nothing in many ways … just another fact that does not support my railing against the empty-headed idealism of “Greens” or worse Liberals who are all a bunch of dead beat communists who probably do traffic in children or would protect people who did if it brought them power and money so blind with ambition and immoral greed they are.

And after all of this desultory, fractured, fragmented exploration, I realize all I have ever been doing is looking for America. I have been leaving America to return to America. America a maze of 300 million paths. Opportunity and hell all at your doorstep. Mother contextualizing heal for me. I pushed her on her political views when she pushed me. There must be a deeper reason. What about abortion. It is always what about abortion. Implications that the left are immoral. Why can they just put a brick through a window when they are upset. A lot of talk about they. I have intentionally attempted to avoid the ambiguous or dog-whistle they. I realize my people love this they and deploy it with aplumb and seemingly zero compunction. It is an effective rhetorical flourish because it somehow is the current net of broadsides, scooping up all enemies of the cause of America First or Making America Great Again of the leader who is opposed to all of this. All of them. Mythologically taking the helm of the cause the great Manichean machination of America, finally with Christ at the levers once more. A force to balance against the evils of the time. Infanticide. A liberal, Latin pope. Each generation becoming less godless and immoral. The beauty and goodness of capitalism and the importance of the market of ideas. The importance of freedom and self-determination. But freedom without Christ is bondage and folly which is why we are a Christian nation and always will be. This great tradition of ours brought over from Germany and England and the great old European nations of our medieval soul. Back before the world was round. Back before the longer tides of history began to answer their incessant moon calls. The galloping, striding decades of discovery and production and expansion. Destiny Manifesting itself in each perfect life, breathed into our sphere of forms. Each eyed child and perfumed princeling held within the hands of Christ. Every soldier run through with bayonet, left to bleed out among his platoon of lazy pacifist, the poetry of their lives overrun by the advancing ambitions of the age. Insanity worn lightly. Insanity worn heavily. Illness breaking the dreams of one’s youth, or career simply drawing the moisture from their once fertile beds, left with husks to hold before your fading eyes, before the approaching dark of the end of day. Blood meridian calling, memory receeding, meory to be returned to some day, transformed, undulating, divided, fragmented, carved into a faceted stone. Hall of mirrors casting light about, back and forth, not in an act of deception, but in an act of illumiation and reflection. Finding the non-linear, vibrations contained within the holy paths of thought.

I realize all I was ever doing was looking for you.

I realize all I was ever doing was looking for myself.

I realize all I was ever doing was looking for America.

We just want to emote until we are dead.

And the ship goes soaring up into the air on a pillar of water before crashing down to the ocean surface, splintering mighty ship into match sticks (could put the Pynchon quote in here).

I’d rather have a hard talking president that a smooth talking one that sells out the American people.

My family is America. I had moved to the city and become more progressive. They had remained in Gladstone and turned gleefully conservative both religiously (converting to Catholicism) and politically (long time Limbaugh “Ditto head”, they felt VERY comfortable in the Trump camp) it is safe to say that these things has at time freaked me the fuck out, been enormous elephants in the room, and seem to be the ideological underpinnings of a familial cold war exacerbated by my parents aging memories and attention spans, unhelpful generalizations and aggressive right -wing jargon (Governor Nazi, well why do THEY think they have the right to just throw a birck through a window if their not happy about something.. . wait… sudeenly my position is to defend the rights of people to put bricks through windows. This doesn’t really feel like a fireside chat all of a sudden. Can’t we try to break down the socio-economic and historical substance unpinning this civil symptom. What is going on here? What happen and how can we improve the situation in a wholistic, long-term solution, process, attempt, effort, consensus, goodwill, rallying, allying, identifying, advocating, crusading, participating, courageously overcome the hate that we encounter whatever the stripe. Because our love comes from a harvest of abundance, not of blight. We have sewn our seeds of self and cultivated our interests and sacrificed for our family and wrestled with our demons and called out to the gods and written a thousand miles of letters in the sand, figuring and reconfiguring the swept of the stars on their course. Talking the pulse of the ocean from what I have know of smells and tastes of salt, cries and protestrations of gulls, buoyant detlas and estuaries yawning great sludge-mineral bays wild with undercurrent eddies.

She was mad. This wasn’t about anything in particular. This was about some anger. Some spoiled nostalgia. Recreating the big family and the Catholic ritual. Coming back into the fold of the cycles. How far back were we Catholics I wonder. That would be worth knowing. That would be interesting to know. If my family’s politics were not so hostile, I feel like I would be much more inclined to read up more on the Catholic. Given that I am now kind of sort of culturally Catholic, I think there is a treasure trove of tradition and ritual that I would be interested to learn about at my leisure and I am sure it would give me some more understanding of my family and their religious/spiritual practice. Which would be great! I mean who wouldn’t want to learn a little Latin. As if was she implying that she was mad about something and want the to be abcle to brick somethihgn, or that this election was somehow about punishing THEM for throwing bricks through windows. Like if OUR HERO is reelected THEY will finally face JUSTICE but it THE ENEMY is elected THEY will just get off scot free for throwing bricks through windows just because they are unhappy about something which is unAmerican and the Conferderate flag is not a racist symbol. We believe. We think. There were a lot of good things about the south. Holding my daughter my mom gets on her inevitable soapbox about abortion, painfully drawing the analogy directly to my daughter and how much it must pain me to think about all of those slaughtered babies when I think about how much I love my daughter, because I love my daughter right, you love her, just like you love all babies and all babies have a right to life or do you just love your daughter only in as uhc as she is an extension of yourself? IS that what it is? You just love your daughter in as much she is an extension of yourself. That is what you are saying if you vote for Joe Biden. And you are going to hell and hell is Cancel Culture. Just canceling out anything you don’t agree with until you are in your own self-created hell. Am I in hell now. No. It is not complete yet. When will it be completed? Sounds a little confused and defeated by this and now I just am started to feel mean. I do not push back. I just say oh, really, and kind of talk back key points to her to make sure I am understanding her correctly. And I believe that was the final straw. That was the spark that ignited my rocketship of independent living and indepent thinking. It was the fulcrum from which I could redine my relationship to substances and my lived practices. Finally for the first time in my life full embracing my instinct to write and finding a new level of balance in my body in the parallel practice of yoga which during this time melded together with writing as a truly symbiotic practice. A separation one from the other no longer exists.

Having listened to your twice-told tales,

Hear tell three times of mine.

Let’s annoit ourselves in rhyme,

Flesh away our mortal days.

Seek the company of sorcerers and whores.

Besmirch the name of Christ to all who’ll hear.

Defile the cross, wear women’s lingerie.

Fornicate with strangers

And masturbate out in the hay.

Consume a sea of drugs,

And slash a score of throats,

Then raise a stout-walled castle,

Encircled by a blood-filled moat.

But do not worry, we’ll stay in touch,

Watch for stiff dispatches from my solitary cell,

As I while away eternity in my beloved hell.

I’ve been called, I’ve been called

Herald of the coming Lord

I’ve been called to return with him to glory

I have wondered, I have played I have whiled away my days

But by the blood of Christ I ride on glory bound.

02/06/2021 (from letter to Erik)

The process of the yellow river has created an artifact- over 3000 yellow lined pages poured out with my accruing computer knowledge and my vomit mixed rambling on family and politics, religion, and writing and art, and travel, and vocation, literature and history and myth and fantasy and poetry and psychology, physiology. I have felt at times that I do not have themes. I do not have a message per se. I am not a prophet and this is no great matter. An APOLOGIST is the only legitimate writer. As if writers are sort of fey lawyers providing the IMAGINARY and EMOTIONAL infrastructure to the IDEOLOGY. I think growing up I kind of had the sense that Max Lucado or C.S. Lewis were the literary ideals. They wrote emotively and descriptively and lively. LUCADO’s descriptions of the passion of Christ were way better written. Not to be judgey but Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John aren’t exactly Dan Brown acolytes. The ideology is all there. You just have to pretty it up. It’s like the MACY’s windows at Christmas. We know the form, we know, in general what should be in there, but if we can keep freshening it up. Sync our SACRED and POLITICAL and COMMERCIAL latencies the PANTONE of the moment.

Does the fact that I am trying to be intentionally literal undercut the sincerity of my letter. Isn’t expression too contrived if it is planned and drafted and redrafted and sat on and shifted around and cut and pasted. Could anything this “constructed” be true?

Having first row seats to Esme’s journey to literacy I am feeling much more inspired by the “artificialness” of the process. Language is an act of perpetual becoming. Language continues to take on new shades and stage pitched battles in the streets and comment sections everywhere. Esme’s literary journey is creative and iterative and inspired and incorrect, occasionally incoherent and illogical, but always with this seed crystal of emotive and intellectual expression. She is unafraid to be misunderstood or to offend or to confuse. She gets inspired to use a word (an inspired that has been formed by experience, either lived or read about in a story by herself now, but also likely to have been read with her mother or father or teacher in a close, intimate, caring, interested, emotive, sympathetic, empathetic act. Has her 6 year literary journey yield Truth? Truth has something to do with the totality of things. I don’t think truth can be an abstract conception of things. I don’t truth can be a system. In fact I don’t think we can even quite full apprehend the totality of truth… this is why we need each other. This is why we need the rich interconnectedness of humanity. Diversity.

What it has yield though is an incredible richness of language and laughter and discussion and examples and poems and stories… something in this process also aided her into testing into a Chicago’s gifted track which was not a huge focus of ours, but in this year of super challenging schooling, we are very grateful that she is in a pretty small class and is engaged and being challenged.

This openness to language is an important part of the culture of our family. Which seems like a funny thing to have to state, but as I have been working through how all these things are connected in the world at large and in my world at small and as I inherited a worldview that recognized only one capital T truth and that being the one that Jesus Christ himself was crucified to and the watershed of judgements on all things of this world that could not be threaded through this needle eye of orthodoxy.

I am a cypher. I need input. Not always a lot. But I need some. I need a chapter of John McPhee, a couple chapters of Joseph Campbell interviews with Bill Moyer, a couple Wittman poems and some Emerson quotes. I suppose we have been trained in some way to react with a lot of very complicated personal responses to very compact and interconnected symbols. Unpacking these symbols beyond what they viscerally illicit is incredibly complex if we give ourselves over to the complexity of I, open ourselves to the complexity of it.

That is kind of a thing in life isnt’ it? Being open to the complexity of things. Having the wherewithal for the complexity of things. Sure, many of the complex things are beyond us, or PRACTICALLY beyond us, meaning perhaps they would be obtainable, or understandable or useable if we gave them some of our attention. Unfortunately, shifting attention to something new necessarily means releasing or lessoning your focus on something else. We have a PIE of attention and unfortunately that PIE is no infinitely expandable.

How do we justify what gets intention? This puts us on the whole wide loop and the inability to answer this could either be taken as the follishness and impossibility of the project or as proof of its robustness as an engine of thought and consideration and language. As a cypher I am only as good as my metaphors. Input comes through my metaphor laden mind, metaphor laden, metaphor tinted, metaphor influenced, metaphor hungry, metaphor manufacturing, metaphor seeking. I am but this mirror and I think I have been afraid of what I will find in there. Something shallow? Arrogant? Impossibly fragmented with pieces missing? Who the fuck really knows. Maybe it is something really good. Maybe its my true self and acknowledged existence and robust sense of self and self-confidence and the key to reconciling all my issues with my family (AMERICA).

The insane aspect of all of this is that I am America. Despite my “dropping out” and digging way deep in that I have ever heretofore gone, I feel that I am more America than ever. And the America that I found that is going to sustain and endure and that is sustaining and enduring, literature, music, this country, rivers and lakes,

“The way we look at the world is the way we really are. See it from a fair garden and everything looks cheerful. Climb to a higher plateau and you'll see plunder and murder.” Jack Fate

I hadn’t been looking to poltics

She begins to SUNDOWN around 3. Grandpa gives he a glass of wine, not two because then she will fall asleep and he can’t carry her off the couch, Grandma pipes up that he won’t give her two because he’s afraid that’s she’s going to RAPE him! Grandma’s dementia is quite progressed, but to everyone’s delight she is super happy and loving. Way sweeter and affirming and kind than during her executive years when she was kind of prickly and gossipy and seemingly perpetually annoyed with my Grandfather and not without good reason.

They live in a ranch and sleep in the back bedroom where my Annette and unlce lived for years before they finished their lake house and retired early after the sale of their in town gas station to a couple from India.

But that image of grandma and grandpa laughing in bed, in the dark, in the dead of winter, in the middle of a pandemic that has taken the lives of over 470,000 people , many, many of them in my Grandparents demographic, aged, weakened, isolated by the pandemic, with the razor wire of the medium security prison where two of my uncles worked for decades gleaming in the moonlight out on the main road into town. Grandma sleeping and laughing in her sleep, so goodnaturedly, so contentedly that Grandpa starts to laugh too.

And my parents cruising up and down that road in cars in the 70s. Feeling their teen years. Getting high, going fishing, hunting, making Kung fu movies, camping, scuba diving in inland lakes, kegger parties, the drinking age was only 18 then.

02/10/2021

What was I afraid of losing. There was something I was afraid of losing. This identity that I have yet to be able to fully form. These letters and postcards. These words from the chaos, finding some semblance or order. Finding meaning in the messages. Loving with an open heart. Opening my body. Staying open. Not simply drugging myself to sleep. Last night I went to bed early and got up at 6:30 and it was very good. Good to sleep early and good to wake early. Esme woke with a swollen left eye. Just bulging and fluid filled, but not causing her any pain. Allergic reaction? Cellulitius. These are the little things that crop up and are unexpected, but demand your attention. My tonge is sore. My tongue is tight. Am I sick? Am I uptight? I want to make that list of body terms that talks about holding tension in.

02/11/2021

The girls head out into the snow. I’m on the porch. Change shirt. Eye drops. Body and face wash with aromatic soap. Toothbrush. Stretching. Thinking. Addiction? Body does feel awfully good. Stretching. Writing. Ideas flow. Giving over to the multitude, being a receptacle. Cultivating projects over time. Clockwinder is ripening, it is getting very interesting. Can see why writers are hesitant to talk about their work in progress. Finding my process very free form and hopefully cumulative. Bringing together material that I can bring together, soil to till, memories, voices, medium, methods, habits, attitudes, energy, discipline, dedication,commitment, tenacity, reverence, quiet, peace, snow, the girls voices out in the yard or crossing the alley, calling to Anna as the snow falls on the last lunar day of the year. Let the new big cycle begin.

02/12/2021

How to be hyper-productive without being manic. Or at the very least appearing manic. Where is the grace of the swan, calmly lollying through the water, with her flipped feet wheeling a million times a minute below the surface. And if it is manic, if it is a big effort and the whole process takes every last shred of your wherewithal, should you even try to expend any energy trying to explain it? Explain what happened. What you are doing? Perhaps goals are enough. Get a job in tech. Develop my writing. Develop my Chinese skills. Overcome my digital dislocation. Working to the overall end of improving my vocation/family balance. My life balance— my life being a balance of the vocation I love and the people I love. How to hold to these truths in the midst of self doubt. In the midst of the necessary valley of despair, when you truly face your ignorance, your lack of discipline, your poor adult habits that impede you from being the parent, partner, worker that you wish you were. Making an honest effort on all fronts and feeling stretched between each, without a clear path ahead. And in some ways any path would do. Committing to any path would do. But only the existential despair of infinite possibilities, which obviously was not a true casting of things at twenty nor is it at 40, but the many resaoble paths do feel inifinite when your life seems to be running parallel with those million other different ruts, but without the hope of ever crossing. And you have jumped ruts before. You have keeled over you’re your education track which took you to Europe and Asian and created the experiencial basis and context for your adult life and launched and solidified the most important partnership in your life— your wife. And then when the prospect of having kids entered the scene and the need for stability and steady, increasing income and savings and decent health insurance and a mangeable yearly rhythm of vacations and holidays to stay connected with friends and family. But then finding your moved to rut feels increasingly narrow and rough sliding and the balance you had dreamed of is all gunked up and cemented in, the run off of working 8 years of working most holiday weekends and holidays, and attempting to agilely maintain relationships with shattered weekends and paltry vacation to make it up. We have ridden the silver linings. We have accepted the increasing distance being economically out of sync with the rest of my family (I do not have a house that is condusive to hosting large families, nor is street parking super convenient for my brother’s unwieldy 15 passenger van). My whole family is Catholic with 17 potential godchildren born on to this uncle, I have exactly zero godchildren because we are not suitable godparent material due to the states of our souls and the infinite amount of time between now and our last proper confession.

I truly do not want to be dismissive, but I want to be real and honest and thoughtful and good-faith curious and loving and supportive. I want to overcome your cynicism and mine… which is its own kind of idealism no?

02/14/2021

No Alcohol or weed today until 6:00. Have I felt depressed today? Yes, but in a productive way—straightened up. I am very focused. I only want to be working or drunk or a little or lot stoned. Took a whisky nip and crack a beer right at 6:00. I know what I am feeling right now is a reaction to not having any THC in my system.

02/15/2021

You know what you need to do, but you don’t have the wherewithal to do it.

Frustrated because you feel unable to do the things that you need to do to get stronger, improve situation.

**02/23/2021**

These is no reason to write. I write at 6:05 in the morning while the forced air blower blows over the while noice maker (to keep the baby asleep with all the sirens and all) and Marcel the cat grooming himself in the silver first light, music of the spheres almost audible curiously as to why I’m sitting cross-legged on a yoga mat hunched over a yellow legal pad smelling distinctly of cannabis. There’s no reason to write it occurs to me, but many emotions.

He felt cold and stoned and tired and so he went to bed and she was on her period and feeling bad about her back and it was such a weirdly consistent loop. And she was venting which was fine. But what could he do? He could go to bed. He did not ever regret going to bed. He has never regretted going to bed. Ever.

The morning had been goo so far and could continue to be good. He need to be strong and kind and engaged—his heart was open now and could be open without fear of hurt—he was stronger now and better at healing. His body felt stretched and thirsty for cool water.

**02/26/2021**

Childhood is great, except for the little fact that you are a complete emotional cripple.

All the gaslighting. Don’t believe what you see and what you know. Believe what I tell you.

Attempting to make people doubt what they believe to be true.

Being pulled into the matrix of doubt and judgement.

Let’s lever from here. If I am sick then that obviously becomes a big focus. And we should order things up. If I just happen to have a weird neck bruise along with my annoying tongue lesions then here we are in another episode of let’s take this minor issue and lever some substantial changes—beer drinking, weed smoking, the usual suspects. Now we have to admit that wee has affected our relationship with betsy and our health—so stop being such a joker about it and get your head straight and your tongue straight.

Wanted to text Pete P. when I was stoned and excited about connecting with him about tech. This impulse completely dissipated when I wasn’t stoned.

Getting some distance from habitual marijuana use is a personal goal of mine.

**02/25/2021**

Renamed this A\_Failed\_Attempt

* Sketching out why he thinks he will die
* Why writing is an absolute waste of time but so is golf
* Religion is exactly what you do— its your trap, you can’t comphrend that, but something can.
* Neck bruise
* Candida
* Weight angry red node in the back
* Chest tightness. Is it my chest? My spine?
* Heart failure?
* Too much marijuana smoke.
* Too much drinking.
* Or are you finally getting healthy? Finding your stride?

Slowly closer. Hand over hand. Mummified night over mummified night. Dragging March dead weigh and resistant through the amoral fortitude of this uncertain season.

You know who you are in winter—your personal charms, your extroverted personality, your thrist for bright sun and soft clouds are snuffed out.

**03/09/2021**

He didn’t need much to fire him up. Especially with her. She could get under his skin in a second. It was the understood prejudgement. Assumed on both sides. Both sides equally convinced that the other is not engaged in a good faith negotiaton.

I was undone by my desecated, neglected out of necessity dreams,

And they in turn, over time, in acted their revenge

By deconstructing my map of meaning, in response to my negligence, leaving any since of forward momentum on learning or writing or anything just went flying out the window.

Elijah Katz was a werewolf you hear? A werewolf. As absurd as that sounds it was true. We’ll have to work through it together.

One last listen through of Carrie Lowell on this day 40. We left the mountains at noon and went forward with nothing by the gifts of the Ides and the great Buddha looking down with his belly bouncing benevolently and Jesus Christ taking me from birth to death to rebirth. His lifecycle sets the tempo of the arc of the year. He clearly deserves his due. Was the chosen one once. You would’ve have chosen to choose him too at various points in history, you virtual or literally had to in certain places at certain times. And I the wagging tongue, the crabby agnostic fag who just sulks in the corner and drags on her red box Marlboros he buys by the carton on the reservation for a bargain. He no longer goes to play the machines at the casino, but instead tries to nightly write about it, the best he’d been able to muster was:

“s-l-o-t”

l-o-s-t l-o-t-s

Writing in the cold, in the wood panel of the little house with the keg in the fridge and the Nintendo hooked up and then later he was off and depressed and he killed himself didn’t he. Shit. He committed suicide and Mark married, but never had children, which is fine, but they ended up being a tragic family. What the fuck is that supposed to mean? Aren’t all families ultimately tragic families?

I’d been all through the vale of great surprises. I liked writing. I was fine at it. I cover some of the local sports of the local newspaper, but sense my retirement from the Coast Guard I’d been hold up in my parents house trying to write my great American novel. Honestly, I do not carry if I can get it published. I just trying to flush it out. I feel it in there just kind of lodged and upset about it. It needs to come out soon or later, so why not just get it out. Get it done with, allow myself to think about something else while I’m ice finishing, or later finishing, or later still sitting in my blind, or on the back deck watching the mist on the lake obscure he ducks as the pas in a hurried, nervous seeming flotilla.

I was thinking about writing some kind of a novel about this Coast Guard Engineer who served in Key West and got really obsessed with the Hemingway legend, he’s kind of my Elvis. And so naturally, I had to write a novel that he would approve of or some 21st century projection of what an eternally wise literary saint like Hemingway would want to have in the world. So I began my quick study by diving into rereading or in a lot more places than I expected, reading for the first time such wonderful stories and novels. The is a great comfort to his stylized prose. On first read it can come off a very sunny and cheery, but on close inspected

Acceptance of the great mystery of being is a practice,

A practice to live well, a practice to die well.

And what was the world before the age of the Christian mystery.

**03/18/2021**

X of Cups : repose, perfection, country house, two girls, town, country, village

The High Piestess II (reversed): attractive, luxurious, disorienting

X of Swords reversed

* Obsidian stone
* Labyrinth of wounds
* Advantage, profit, success, favor

I am 1500 pages behind. Buried in life beyond of being fully dug up ever again.

Feeling like you are buried and will be fully uncovered. You have let parts of your narrative die. You have had to. It has been painful and cushing. It has been cold-stone chilling how easy it has been.

**03/22/2021**

You make everything a spiritual issue. My neck was sore as fuck when I was up in July. I was tense. I had been pushing my body in an intense study and calisthenic regime. I was uptight. I needed to be. I needed to be a little desperate and have a candle under my ass. I needed to be a little anxious and afraid and frankly terrified that I was not going to be able to perform my role as the stable provider of my family and yes this was resulting in me carrying some pretty intense stress in my neck and the rest of my body. And you offered some arrogant, well you should bring it god, have you been praying? That is an arrogant and ungodly response that does not even try and connect with the pain that I am feeling and instead somehow turns the blame on me— you are feeling so bad because you are not right with god. Because you are not trusting in his plan it what he has provided for you. When I would argue that I am currently in my most explicit act of faith I have ever been and I have been trying my best to be open to God and open to life and open to my abilities and insights and other people’s abilities and insights. I have been engaged in a process of learning and growing and fostering of tools that will help my family shift towards a more healthful and balanced and auspicious work-life balance. And I have been in the process of letting go. Of giving myself over to this process. In trusting that the inspiration of this idea, which does not feel like it came entirely from me and in many ways doesn’t really make sense. I have never been a big computer guy. Until three years ago I hadn’t even looked at a computer language without any degree of analysis, despite my self-professed deep interest in and fascination with languages of all stripes. My promiscuous curiosity has always been a challenge to my mastery of things, but I think another challenge has been my openness to certain topics or my confidence in my ability to engage and grow in certain ways. Let us call this a lack of self-knowledge. Which is often mistook as a lack of self-confience. I think there is a lot of anxiety we carry around about things we don’t know about. It can worry us to be bad at something. Once we understand that we are not naturally good at something, or do not have a sufficient exposure to something, we just sort of wall it off and add it to the incomprehensible heap. Case in point. Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. When I first came to Chicago I had absolutely no idea how to differentiate between the scripts of these three languages. This ignorance was worn lightly, but it also existed as an iron curtain of influence and awareness. 20 years later this imperceptible divider is much removed, which is not to say that I am an expert on anything Korean, Japanese, and Chinese but I have acquired enough impressions and knowledge to at least differentiate between the script and cultures of the three Asian monoliths. Which powerfully sets me up to acquire more understanding and context for the three cultures. And with my more sophistication because I can now speak to the text as being Korean or Japanese or Chinese rather than just Asian, a term whose generic generalizations has the same quixotic intention of bundling up the Scots and Swiss and Sicilians as being European. But then I fel like knowledge arrives doubly cut. For as your knowledge specializes and more categories are created making the world more understand or at least categorizable and open to structured analysis, the forking paths of knowledge and sophistication (awareness versus depths of knowledge) you at some point, if you are a reasonably curious person realize that the sea of context and depth is infinite, a river in contant flux and renewal. An illusion of uniformity and stasis, despite the infinite cycling, regeneration, seasonal transitoriness, rebirth, death, harvesting— beauty, berries, rock bass.

This is what happens when I let go. This is what happens when I truly commit to the process and raise my sights a bit. And venture off enthusiastically into another direction with the focus and the determination to see it all the way through. As I have taken on this marriage, this family, this vocation (writing/yoga/language/technology)

This idea of vocation being more than just how you make money, but also about how you structure your life and maintain your livelihood. Your livelihood was as a househusband extraordinaire- cook, cleaner, child-raiser, plumber, electrician, carpenter, mechanic, woodcutter, arborist, gardener, landscaper, marathoner, coach, race organizer, educator, political partisan, devote Evangelical Protestant, vocal member of the silent majority, backer of the Christian Coalition, Focused on the Family, anti-Feminist (such an angry, destructive, bloodthirsty, selfish movement), devote Catholic, regular Rush Limbaugh listener, ditto head, taxes were bullshit, public schools corrupt and insalubrious. The real Americans, the Christian ones with easily recognizable American cultural interests and allegiances. Distrustful of foreign colleagues. So and so over proscribes. Another white colleague enabled

**03/25/2021**

Doting, diligent, ideal husband; sociopathic stoner, pothead; reclusive writer/web developer

Layers… tech study, furtive writing life, story of gardener’s daughter (DUPREE), straight and then unravelling. Yoga practitioner, little is said.

The story of the Gardener’s daughter came out of the onion idea about the husband and wife split perspective/narrative. A la Gone Girl.

The Gardener has a really amazing garden.

High Fantasy

High and fantasizing

Fragmented and addicted.

Stressed and strung out.

Ritualistically spiralling deeper into creative process—production/vocation??? Madness???

Spousal exhaustion

Artistic shell seeker—necessary aloneness.

We make the most or we do not…

The gaslighting.

The aging.

The Self-delusion

**03/26/2021**

And it seems there is something wrong with me. I can’t stop. Either I can’t actually make myself or it is beyond my will or something. I seem to be hopelessly addicted, habituated; good sense just won’t seem to let me get my ticket punched to the middle class. Lambs with rummy eyes waiting for me to make my move.

Writing for your life. Full of stock. Discipline and guild cunning are all that you lack—maky your way through the field—let’s run our way through to the other side—the other side of this would be fine—we’ll be fine someday and Heminway was kind of a cunt and Frost too and J.F.K a cad—all of these impious examples of what it means to be talented and powerful—the indescresions—the lapses of judgement. We are weak creatures and imperfect—judged by our actions, judged by our words. , judged by our good-faith efforts to be a family man or a servant to society or whatever, or if I could just do exactly as I want to do and as my intuition moves me to and then spin the while thing in some sort of positive light—perhaps diversify my investments with some tax deductible charitable donations.

We spared with the press- all those beatneck deadbeat squares writing the new American story one corny uncredited by-line at a time.

Precious. Simple. Untested. Simply set up to be—but still unclear what work is—what is work? How and why do I do it? Do we do it? I write nearly two pages before I hear Esme up quietly and sweetly calling for Marcel in a soft sing-songy voice. *Marcel*. Helena has begun to call Marcel *“Sal”,*  just like Esme did at 2—Niao (as in the cat sound bu with an N instead of an M) has been fading in usage, but “hee-haw” (donkey), “woof-woof” or “woo-woo” (dog), “bum-bum” (elephant), “wae-wae” (duck) are all still going strong.

Helena’s sentencing are quickly getting more complex:

“Daddy, book read me please!!!”

Or

“Me bit daddy aGAIN”

She loves to say aGAIN… really stressing GAIN (as in increase)

Each time she extorts us for another round of whatever.

03/28/2021

This restlessness--

* Narcissism
* borderline personality disorder,
* healthy anxiety in response to global pandemic, job loss, career change, mid-life crisis, sudden creative urgency, stress of learning a complicated new trade without consistent guard rails on my time.
* Tired parent
* Put upon significant other
* Otherness
* Other
* Self-obsessed
* Self-possessed
* Arrogant
* Dearth of self-esteem
* Result of parental neglect
* Result of parental smothering

Favorite slim mason jar cracked in the pot as I boiled it.

A way to live, to seek a way of living, a way to engage and converse, a way to ground and express, to check and edit, a way to record and remember, a way to expand and transcend, to commit and surrender. How do live with that thin veil healthfully curtaining off the space between my family and my faery maze.

I’d really jumped the Rails-- I’d needed some new rails. Some 21st century skills. Some 21st century skills. I would have been an IT guy in any era. Now I need to consolidate my foundation so I could keep on building.

Had I lost my damned mind?

Was I just ambitions as fuck and a little unhinged.

Humbly following the flow… humbly following the flow…

**03/30/2021**

Self-inflicted tongue cancer. Not giving a fuck about your future self. Callous and unwell. Bitter at his brother and not knowing how to get over it. Feeling the coldness settle into his heart. Can’t change people at all.

Settle your earthly affairs and keep your knots tied.

Focus on the future one day at a time.

Love your future self.

Love the future selves of the ones you love

In a balanced life affirming way.

Effecting coping with life and maintaining satisfying relationships.

Your family’s future, the future of your neighbors, your community, the country, the continent, the hemisphere, the world, the galaxy the universe and so on and on.

Am I the healthiest I have ever been, or the sickest? I wrote naked in my kitchen with a squishy mouthful of coconut oil listening to Devochtka girls in Indiana— daddy’s gotta get some work down— so I am working in the kitchen naked with a squishy mouthful of coconut oil to leach the toxins from your tongue.

Drain the toxins from my tongue. Drain the toxins from my brain. Remove the poison from my brain, the poison from my mind.

So I have locked into this incredibly ambitious cycle of study and writing— all the same old goals, same old loops of self-doubt and drug abuse— off running as my main ballast now though—yoga seems to be the way to go for my *40-year-old-form*.

Have recently stopped caffeine, but am still smoking weed like a bit of a maniac.

Feeling the need for a breeze to free me from this lockstep with THC.

Clear my mind. Find a way to flush through a good chunk of these accumulated notes. The process has one. The process has overcome me. I am overcome. I have been overcome. I am lost to the process and I can either hate it or fear it or feel extremely unsettled about it or I can dig in and learn to accept it and live in it and realize it. Realise the chase, the deep woods and dark clouds it gathers. The work it has cut out for me. I can make the effort. I am making the effort. I can move past this process focused protean state. I can build my chrysalis and I can emerge out the other side. A butterfly never refers you to its chrysalis. Never draws attention to its chrysalis. A butterfly never needs to own up to being a worm. All the worm callers can easily be flown away from.

**03/31/2021**

Tarot, yoga, weed, meditation, massage, breathing, writing

We need a database for all these symbols he says at exactly 1212

You know you have to feed it, but you also know that you can’t force it.

I’d become this very tense, uptight, distracted, addicted, uncreative individual who was just holding things together until he could figure out a way to commit more time to pursue web development and database administration.

Run through with appetities—sickness, weird symptoms, white tongue, weakness…

Stretching out in the sun and doing pushups like some self-contained prisoner trying to make the most of his 20 minutes of yard time—it is all a bit unhinged, but I have a process rolling, so I attempt to just relax and follow the feeds itself out before me.

Incessant monologue in my head.

Succeed at these two things and then what?

Live, engage, don’t be afraid, have fun, laugh, play, don’t drink so much, don’t smoke so much, delight in children.

04/12/2021

He was getting stronger. Never mind the white stuff on his tongue or the on and off tinnitus and the shifting vision and the thorny body and the darkening circles gathering around his eyes, the edging out of the ribs and hips, the lengthening of the torso-- sparation of the shouders and the clung to look of the knobby joints by the dry chaffing skin compressing the form of his flesh against the weight of time. Yes, time has weight.

**04/09/2021**

**Things work out or they do not**

**Some find success**

**Success sometimes destroys or it does not.**

**As does failure or it does not.**

**And he breaks off from writing on this overcast but bright eyed day to smoke and stretch and take a shower and then mediate in the front room on the blue rug near the white rug in the good light, seeking grounding while I stretch and write and process my many threads, attempting to make sense of my fragmentation-- feeling excited that a new country is just outside my front door. Chicago Sober. Hard-boiled detective of healthy culture. Riding the progressive wave. Finding my way-- loving and supporting my girls**

**At least you are at home with your family-- with your girls-- having lost my mind, I now spent my days swimming for it, as it always seemed to be just ahead of me-- upstream**

**04/04/2021**

Trajectory—what are we talking about? Better job, better walk with Jesus. Better poems. Better sex.

While disorientation is not necessarily cause for despair it is also a slippery foundation upon which to leverage the trajectory of one’s life.

**2021/04/01**

The furnace, *the el*, a plane flying over, Marcel scratching and making off-hand comments.

My wife is depressed and has been depressed for a while and I have tried to ignore it and paper over the drag I feel from her most days emotionally and socially, even physically sometimes. When she is cold and distant or I am or she is suddenly eager for my attention with no prelude and I chaff a little at the double standard of desire and strange cat and mouse game it can still remain even for married couples as they try to balance out the household responsibilities and achieve harmony in their home. It has been a tough year— one with some wonderful blessings giving us something rosier to focus on than the unrelenting challenges of the day being blow-horned out of the braindead megaphone in many disparate ways.

In many ways this was the year that I went underground— and this was the year that I found the ground and this was the year that I stopped running, literally. And started standing – and stretching and expanding and soon that body of work that orientation took another metaphor from running— writing— running had always been about success— just do it— fast and slow, sprint and longmileage, doesn’t really matter, it’s the frequency that matters—the conditioning—building up that stride—that automatic, almost mechanical loping that can set you in a pace tacking just right to find the comfortable pressure to resistance ratio, finding that spark, finding that point where it feels like more work to cease the movement than to continue it. I have experienced all of these things with running.

Effort could yield that good current, that good flow.

Hopeless addict, depressed wife, spirally unemployment turmoil attempting to jump industries, but bogged down in the infinite mire of web development and creative maturity— attempting to build a strong partition in my mind for writing to keep the infinite sea of congruity from completely flooding my system— I have this fear that for me to make progress with it it has to be this all or nothing thing. It is a tool like any other— if you continue to approach it soberly and consistently systematically you will get somewhere with it— you have cut out smoking cigarettes, alcohol now, caffience and you have even set yourself up to take a few days away from herb (this written almost 4 months ago and I have not been able to stop smoking herb. I know this is an issue. I know that this is a drag and a distancing point in my relationship with my wife and a financial drag and a memory drag and a productivity drag, but I am worried that if I move away from it I will lose momentum. I will lost my momentum into the process that I have made it so far in. But then I come back and ask— where the hell are we with this process? Does this process even make any sense? It is truly obsessive and elaborate and secretive and expansive and ambitious and iterative and messy and confusing and impressive and inefficient and the unevenness of my productgs make me doubt the whole thing, even though it has blossomed forth into my proudest accomplishment. I have come farther with my writing that I eve expected and I can continue to push even farther.

**2021/04/02**

Tech—perfect cover for doing nothing. Theology, literature, some science—progress made by doing next to nothing… not nothing… but next to nothing…

How about this— I am cured when there is no more sneaky stuff… be there for your wife. Be there for your girls. Show up. Be present.

The secret to smoking pot is not smoking pot.

Not drinking alcohol is so good for me. As is not drinking coffee. Not smoking everyday will truly be an accomplishment. Controlling my habits. Committed to my vocation. Accepting the pressure from my family, dovetailing it into flow. Nourishing the people around me. Air—breathing; Water—consuming; Earth—nourishing; fire—activity. Balance.

Get into a shower, purify, renew. You’ve gotten a whole lot better in your simmering.

And I can do both— I can code and I can do language. They can complement each other and they do complement each other very well. The dancing and weaving intersections of these interests is part of the magic for me, the alchemy, the sweet vocational discovery.

**BREATHING(AIR), STAYING HYDRATED(WATER), STAYING ACTIVE(FIRE), STAYING GROUNDED(EARTH)**

Living and loving, not jut falling back on same old excuses and running the tape on the old rationalizations. Just accepting the facts as they are and moving forward.

Stretching has changed my life. It has connected my body to my intellect—my body to my mind.

And then I went and pissed my time away consuming tea-butter-brownie-joints, whiling my time away in a state of unearthly relaxation or flashflood anxiousness and self-reproach

The anonymity I have had has been astounding—settling, hopefully healing.

Repeated, repeated theme of being disappointed that I have not done more coding because I have been too stoned or I have spent too much time writing or playing music or stretching or reading.

And but yet still positive steps forward with my body and my mind.

**2021/04/28**

Just wanting a woman to take care of me and support me and believe in what I am doing. Dedicated to giving me the time to work and see and explore. “*Tell my wife I love her very much*.” Launching far out into the process. Yes the drugs help to give it an epic dimension, but I believe in the transport. I believe in losing myself in the speed of my fingers on the keys and breathing one with the machine and tinking deeply about something or at least broadly or at least long expanding beyond my narrow limitations, developing something beyond, growing like a tree, rooting down and stretching up, ever stretching, optimistically branching and ascending, hungry for the sky, blindly manically, so slow and deliberate in my motions you’d never guess at my underlying mania.

* Photography
* Chinese: character writing, currently reading *A Moveable Feast* in Mandarin and English, character writing, New York Times bilingual articles. Using bilingual texts to cut out need for dictionaries, focusing on “whole meaning” and building confidence to skim and cruise character articles. Teaching Esme. Speaking only Chinese to her during play time when I am not in the mood to play her persribed game for the umpteeth time, do all kids savor repetition as much as this child does. It’s a little insufferable sometimes…though it is also probably the same drive that underpiners her wonderful learners mind (tested into regional gifted program- accepted 18 out of 400 + applicants, which is just fun to share and also emphasize how grateful we were to despite all the weirdness and challenge of this year, she found herself in a small group of kids that all had supportive parents and solid capabilities. Between work in this cohort, reading at home and her many Literary Godmothers: Grandma Birkey- who has gift us a treasure trove of children’s literature a collection compiled from decades of elementary school teaching by both her and her sister, Bari Zaki- a friend of ours who is a bookmaker and runs a studio/paper shop just down the street from us, she has sold betsy’s folded books out of her shop and has taken a great liking to Esme who loves to “Go see Bari” at her shop where Esme has often been the recipient of lovely Japanese paper wrapped pencils or other stationary type gifts, she always makes sure to write Bari a thank you note and they have felt a sporadic correspondence over the past few years, then there is Ellen who is Esme’s great friend and former pre-school teacher. Ellen is a poet and has both inspired Esme to write her poems and stories and word focused activity books. Throughout the pandemic Esme and Ellen met up virtually for meet ups to catch up on books and outtings and cookings and thinkings and plantings and such, then just downstairs is our neighbor Anna who is a thoughtful theater director with a talent for garden cultivating. She and Esme had garden reading meetups throughout the pandemic— often rereading books that betsy and I or betsy’s mom had already read to her. That repetition that she seems to crave and all kids seems to crave at some point. I have tried to program repeition into my studying. Leaning into certain rout techniques— abstracting the learning process into something that is beyond my own understanding, my own ability even, because that is the whol point, no? Transcending? Going beyond your current ability. Stretching beyond your current ability. Pushing beyond your current understanding. There is certainly a lot of cleverness that we can employ to ignite this process, to enact this process.
* Writing: journaling, adding to themes that have some sort of center of gravity: location, era, topic, theme, setting, form, **Expand(Develop(Contract(Consolidate(Build(Expand)))))**
* Coding and reinventing my career trajectory by locking my self in an 8 by 10 by 10 cell for a year and fueling it with a new age-y prison working out machine. I am in a cycle of canceling. I am blocking things out and pushing them off to deal with on another day. I am opting out of contemporary politics in an effort to right my existential ship and achieve a certain level of material safety and security for my family while simultaneously putting myself on a professional trajectory that won’t suck out my soul and trap me in an unsustainable loop of unhealthy coping matrixes and deferred dreams.
* Spanish- basically nothing these days. An openness, some counting, but nothing of substance. Have to cut something, no?
* Guitar- after an initial burst through the first quarter of the year, have really tried to pull back from it to focus more on reading and coding. I have tried to make guitar more of a rhythmic and technical activity. Something for my body and my fingers and less my mind. Trying to feel the guitar more. This has led me to a new finger picking style of playing that I am really fond of and look forward to developing over the years.
* Fitness and health: having found a solid combination of lower carb, lower impact exercise that my body has responded to really well I am entered moving through my forties leaner and healthier than I have been in years. Finding a better sleep rhythm and finding more contentment in healthier pursuits. I think the fallout is that I have become an even more private, self-involved individual, though for the time being as I plow my vocational efforts into building my 21st century tech skills, I can live with that, especially in as much as this “isolation” has facilitating writing—giving me time and pent up thoughts, observations, experiences to experience in a genuine overflowing of explanation. That overflowing of explanation. It just came out. With limited pre- thought it just spilled out, riding that fine vein where intellect and emotion have melded artfully and unguardedly together. Casting our our years of careful study in being careful.
* Reading- having reach the nadir of hating my books, resenting their weight on my shlves and line of sight, forever stacking and collecting my daughters scattered collections of bpoks, undersiege by books, unread, or eread and heavy before my eyes and my eyes heavy at the end of day, drowsy in the half light of our apartment heavy with the presence of children at last asleep. And the offer to send me two volumes of Ginsburg’s journals, presumably relatively unedited, god bless you for publishing that and I am very glad that you are, and I am so grateful for the bounteous publishing world that we move through. For any book on the planet almost available just on the other side of a touch screen. I have ridden the bouty of books flowing in from living room sales, arriving unbidden in packages from siblings, happened upon in free boxes that look like bird houses close to the ground, ordered off linje new or used, shuffled at home, opened, closed, indexes read, first chapters read, quotes written out, ideas thought about. I am gotten so much mileage thinking about the coupkle of chapters that I read by John McPhee back in the late summer early September. 4th Draft has been a bit on a mantra to me this year. Catalyzing my writing and my reading. Freeing me to collect and explore and EXPAND, CONSOLIDATE, BALANCE, BUILD finding my way forward by managing my fragmentation by embracing it. Leveraging it. Finding ways in which to collect and channel and funnel the fragmentation. Finding AGILE systems and projects to receive the input and expression and analysis. In the process developing the very skills that I have always wished to have, but felt somehow separated from. Overcoming my perspective of seeing everything as a ZERO SUM game. Getting comfortable with my unknowing. My limitation. My eventual spectacular failure. The only thing that will save you from spectacular failure is good faith ORGANIZATION and other people’s kindness. Good faith organization is my phrasing of having your shit together without being neurotic about it. Having your things in order. Having your affairs in order. Mitigated your risks. Attempted to limit the fallout of your failures on other people. Finding inspiration and grounding in this process. Finding confidence and strength and flexibility in this process. Finding a source of WIND and WATER and EARTH and FIRE- full of life and nourishment and balance and activity; inspiration, optimism, perspective, effort; energy, uplift, support, passion;
* ***WIND*: life, inspiration, energy**
* ***WATER*: nourishment, optimism, uplift**
* ***EARTH*: balance, perspective, support**
* ***FIRE*: effort, passion, activity**
* Spending time with my wife
* Spending time with family
* Correspondence
* Socializing

I hate to make the questions and uncertainly to be a big part of the narrative, but it doesn’t have to dominate it. You can kind of construct it. Give it a form and a place in the narrative. A tone or a symbol. A force a presence. Something looming. This sense that *“Everything is not in its right place*” ,“*I really don’t know where here is*”, relishing the desperation rationalization that no one ever really knows where here is and you should be grateful of your hard fought insight and relish it. The razor’s edge existence— the tipping point intensity as you swing and sway between heading toward a bright new future, or what, what else? What is in the other direction? Something unclear, something inchoate, failure? Generic writ large failure? Can we be more specific? Financial failure, well probably not completely, probably having to push off buying a house for a few more years, which honestly until I really get a career going with reasonable working/living work life/balance conditions I don’t really relish owning a home. Is it death that I fear then? I suppose it is stress. Human death. Being forced into situations where you must repress your interests and talents and subjugate them in the interest of making money for someone else to the end of supporting your life(your family, personal responsibilities etc). Oh, boy, he finally understands how life works. Well, isn’t that something. I have been somewhat naievely and self-defeatedly been pursuing the end of supporting my family while also trying to develop the skills that do interest me (Chinese and writing and now coding) to the end that they would some day assist me in bridging the gap between my personal pursuits and my professional pursuits.

My writing has stalled because I have not given it enough time, now in my two decades of lowkey trying to crack the code on it, been unable to pull together an effective systematic development of my writing projects or even the process of writing. This has changed this year to great affect and it feels truly like a turning point in my existence. This pronouncement is perhaps a little THC fuled at the moment, but the proof is in the pudding as within the last 7-8 months I have written more coherent prose and poetry than ever before. Of course I have to thank my current status of being unemployed for having time and wherewithal to get my thoughts scribbled down or hacked onto a computer screen, but it is also largely due to the inspiration I have been able to find in computer programming as both a symbiotic skill set and disciplining challenge engagement with which has radically changed the way I wholistically think about writing and the process of writing. The projects/pieces/topics that I am tracking has exploded from a handful to well over 50. The process has been abstracted and to some extent the pieces and the letters are writing themselves. They are the overflow of thought or emotion directed through a voice or a tone or in a certain spirit of peppered with a specific set of shared history and mutually understood or misunderstood semiotic mise-en-scene and the wonder of all of this can really break down under scrutiny, under the scapel of intent and comparison. But the intent is always so much more than any given line, and sentiment, any point. One of my evolving intents. Intentions that I have named and followed forward as one would a hypothesis, like, huh, I wonder what this is for, perhaps it is for, blank, and off we go, applying, cutting, pasting, the joy of collaging is that the process seems effortless. It is all judgement and combination. It is all editorial. What is that difference between the editorial and the creative mind. One intent I have attempted in carrying forward is just this idea that you can write free and energetically and engaged and creatively and life-affirmingly and curiously without being didactic or cynical. Or you can be somewhat didactic but knowing of it, conscious of your human limitation in an appealing way. An invitation to consider that brings us closer together rather than pushes us apart. There are a lot of questions and not a lot of answers. So yes, let us celebrate the questions, not weaponize them. Is this an editorial decision? Celebrate the questions. Nurture the questions. Reframe them. Approach them in different ways. Look at them historically. Internationally. Within a certain context, through a certain lens, from a certain perspective, conservatively, progressively, obsessively, distractedly, up close, from afar. The heretical many mouthed god who blesses all conclusions and whose cistern of sacrificial blood has been pumping robustly for ages now.

9/26/2021

People don’t like a critical voice. They don’t appreciate a malcontent. A scoffer. A questioner.

Need to cut back on drinking and smoking to bolster my temper. These influences decrease my conscientiousness, decrease my ability to socialize and be extroverted, and increase my neuroticism -- negative/unproductive ways of dealing with stress.

Hungover -- feeling low, too low to care though-- that perspective. Finally beaten down to the ground. Pulped. Final level collapsed -- seeing it all so clearly.

You feel hungover (6 beers), more, solo, binge drinking.

The little one is pooping and peeing everywhere and whining about everything. Proximity to a toddler while trying to manage the stress the pandemic, the corrosive politics as I attempt to breakthrough my technological limitations, my shattered concentration. So tired of this poison dynamic.

Am I wasting my time or am I finally taking it.

Root in your family.

Root in contemplation.

Root in action.

Root in exploration.

Root in peace seeking and bringing order.

Broken, impatient, zero emotional wherewithal.

You function, get by, but just don’t feel good.

4/19/2013

Mista Grand,

I'm really impressed.  You've put together a really compelling, mysterious, interesting story. And I feel really honored and inspired that you passed it along to me for a read. I can’t stress enough that this whole process has been fantastic! Stepping into your book has been a lot like walking into a house that a friend has built completely on his own. "You built this! This is incredible.”  Flashes of really impressive workmanship jump out. The amount of work put in is absolutely apparent.  And yet walking through the house I start noticing things.  Small things first.  And then bigger ones.  This room needs another coat of paint, this hallway still lacks crown molding, holy shit this part of the house is missing a weight-bearing wall!

Thus, that's going to be one thing I will respond too- what, at least in my reading of the story, it is missing or hasn't had fully developed. The other two cents I want to add come out of another metaphor.  I read somewhere that good writing sends readers into a sort of dream. And as long as the writing is good and smooth and doesn't shake the reader's confidence too much they will happily stay in the dream from page one through the end.  With that in mind writers have to be wary of aspects of their writing that might break the dream.  These aspects could be a break of tone, uneven style, or even jumps of logic that don't quite bring the reader along. When these occur the dream is broken, the flow ceases, and we, the reader, wake up cranky, thinking once again about the this and that of the life we live that has continued on while we were in the dream the author had been weaving for us.

As I’ve mentioned already I have really enjoyed jumping into your story.  I love reading.  I love stories. Digging into your story and carrying it around and flipping it and talking to it has been really fantastic.  Thus, I want to say straight away, thank you for lending me your story.  I have had a great conversation thus far with it, and by extension with you as well.  Here's hoping I will be able to articulate my thoughts in a helpful, constructive way.  Also with that, all the thoughts that I am going to throw at you are exactly that- they are thoughts and impressions and ideas.  My hope is that they can add to the conversation and the process of your story as it continues to live on and grow and sharpen on the page, in your mind, and in the minds of anyone that has the luck to come in contact with it. Beyond that I just want to underscore that I have only read your manuscript exactly one time, and therefore have spent probably a fraction of time that you have with this tale. And with that in mind I am shooting from the hip. I am speaking off the cuff. Slinging impression, thoughts- I’m blogging here. Take it for what it is worth.  Okay, with all that said, I'll going to stop with the qualifications and the contextualizations and just start throwing shit at you.  Here we go.

**First: a brief outline of how I see the story developing:**

*Tom in jail / Tom out of jail / Back with friends / Hello, Jenny / Ass kicked / Recovery and Jenny. / A new job; a new relationship / Principles explained / Relationship falls apart, break up / Frat house crisis / Rescue / Hospital again / Megan “running girl” backstory / Resolution*

**Some constructive criticism of the story:**

\* Story arc- While you have a pretty complete story arc, I feel like you need (frankly, in the interest of making it more commercial) to tighten up the overall progression of the story and ratchet up the conflict.  I think this is really key, both to strengthen the overall story, increase the pacing, and provide more opportunities for external action and conflict to develop the themes of the story.

\* In general a classic writing truism (especially with narrative writing) is "show don't tell".  At times I felt like some of your background exposition could be replaced with descriptive flashbacks, or scenes that arise from the action of the story.

\* Completing the arc-  after experiencing the complete arc of the story from beginning to the end I feel like the story needs to emphasis a more concrete central conflict to make it more accessible, more compelling, and to set up a bigger payoff at the end of the story.  The central conflict that I feel like could pull everything together would be "finding the girl."  Now you already have elements of this throughout the story, especially since Tom Siver's story of finding himself is very much linked to finding “the girl” that he can fully connect with and that will allow him to connect (reconnect) with himself.  So what I mean about "finding the girl" is that when Tom gets out of prison he should be determined, obsessed even with finding the girl that he saved, but then who didn't come forward to testify at his trial.  I think this is really key because this is the central betrayal that has shaken his confidence and trust in other people.  It's the betrayal that turned his heroic act into something criminal.  I feel like he would want to find this girl.  And I think his motivations for doing so are really interestingly complicated.  Obviously he wants to be vindicated.  Also, there is probably some thought to her safety since he has no idea if she was able to run to safety on the day of the attack.  He is also extremely angry with her since he feels like she betrayed him.  But even beyond that he also saw her running that day and she is stunningly beautiful, so perhaps he is sort of in love with her as well.  The dreams that keep haunting him about her speak to all of these different levels of interest in this "running girl"   he wants to find the girl- he is obsessed, does he hate her, does he love her, does he want to embrace her, does he want to punish her? This could be a really compelling central conflict that provides the chapter by chapter gas to drive the story at a compelling pace from start to finish. I’ve heard that Alfred Hitchcock summarized the formula of every successful suspense story as being that of establishing a character and then giving him/her a “McGuffin” that he/she needs to find. What that McGuffin actually is doesn’t matter at all, the important thing is that the central character has something tangible that he/she is pursuing.

If this theme were developed I feel like it could be the engine that moves the story forward.  It would represent something external that could reflect and incapsulate Tom's internal struggle.  It would be a conflict that would cause tension between him and his friends, and especially between him and Jenny, since one of the things standing in the way between their closeness would be his obsession with finding this girl who he hates/loves/needs to meet in order to be redeemed.

\* Another conflict that needs to be ratcheted up is Tom's conflict with the Lecey brothers.  I think you have a great opportunity to develop them into more substantial villains.  Villains that can both challenge Tom more and represent something that he could have become and could still become.  You've already established that Tom has a lot of things in common with these guys- privileged background, sexual appetite, etc.  One of the themes that has already emerged from the story is this theme of self and sex.  Who we fuck and how we fuck defines who the fuck we are.  Tom is hot, girls want to fuck Tom because he is hot.  The Lecey brothers are not, people don't want to fuck the Lecey brothers... or do they? What do the Lecey brothers have? Well, they are rich and educated and well connected... that’s pretty sexy when you think about it.  But no matter what all these fucking and violence makes me think about why we fuck. You’ve definitely established that we fuck out of attraction and out of love (or what we perceive as love), but then you also bring in this idea of possession- which is great by the way.  In this way sex becomes an act of extending yourself, bringing the other into your being. Beautiful, yes. Potential messy, oh yes. In that you have the idea of establishing yourself as a strong self because you are able to fuck another person. This entails some sort of strength.  And why are you strong? You are strong because you are hot or rich or have social power or charisma or violent power. This is a theme or a whole knot of themes that I think you could explore a bit more deeply with the characters that you already have spinning in this cool, twisted tale of yours.

\* The Fountainhead reference: it struck me as a bit under developed. I didn’t have a clear image in my mind of why the living room was perfect for Tom. It didn’t bring me into any sort of deeper understanding of Tom or the living room. Worth noting though is how the Fountainhead reference and the focus on sex and rape that the story develops made me think of the rape scene in the Fountainhead of Dominque by Hoard Roark... what to make of this.

\* Tom's quick recovery from his severe beating.  It seemed way too quick that he was suddenly having athletic sex, lifting garbage cans, and operating a cumbersome floor buffing machine.  I think you missed an opportunity to explore his inner woundedness through his physical woundedness more.

\* Tom's reaction to the attack and the fact that the attack seemingly came out of the blue for him.  First of all didn't he have a sense that those guys were going to be out to get him.  And then after they got him why wasn't he either more worried about being attacked again, or more set on getting revenge or bringing those bastards to justice.

\* On that note, why wasn't Corey more upset.  If someday kicked the shit out of my good friend or brother, I would be on the warpath (and I am a pretty mild-mannered chap).  I never really saw much anger or fear in Corey's reaction to the attack.  I think bringing in more anger and fear would underscore the tension and rivalry and central conflict between the Lecey brothers and Tom and his people.  There was that one scene where Jon Lecey sees Jenny and Tom at the liquor store.  That was a great scene, and went a long way to building tension.  It was a pretty isolated episode though so the tension wasn’t really sustained.  I think you could do a lot more with developing that conflict.  For example, adding in more scenes in which the Lecey brothers either follow and terrorize Tom and just in general try to sabotage his return to his life outside of prison.  Especially since self and possession is a big theme. The Lecey brothers could try to posses Tom's life, meaning trying to get inside his head and life and sort of control him through fear, as a sort of absolute head fuck and revenge on the guy that kicked their asses. I mean, these guys are smart right. They are educated and they have money, so couldn’t they find more subtle and penetrating ways to exact their revenge. For example, coming to his work, finding out where he lives. Trying to steal his friends and girl friend, or at least trying to turn them against him.  Leaving a dead dog in his yard.  Or just terrorizing him and his friends in subtle and then increasingly horrible ways. Or another angle could be, that the terror they inflict could be so subtle that only Tom has a sense of it and that sense isolates him from his friends, because they don't get it.  And they might just think that he is having a hard time coming back to life on the outside.  This dynamic could be combined with his obsession to find the "running girl"  which would provide two external conflicts representing his desire to reclaim his life, but also externally representing how difficult it is.

In general, anything you could do to make the villain's more formidable would strengthen the story.  As you have it now the villains are dumb and ugly and selfish and pretty incompetent.  How much more terrifying would they be if they were smarter and more charismatic.  One sort of terror they could inflict on Tom would be trying to, on the surface, make peace with him once he gets out of prison.  Remembering that the accepted story of the incident that landed Tom in prison was that he attacked them.  That isn't the truth and it isn't the version that Tom believes, but how fucking evil would it be if the Lecey brothers tried to make sure that everybody close to Tom believed that story. They could do things to try and convince Jenny and Corey and Kayla that their story was true, but they have big hearts and they just want to let bygones be bygones and in general are trying to make nice with Tom, all the while plotting to destroy him.  This could again contribute to Tom's isolation and mental breakdown as he would be the only person that suspected anything, suspecting the truth, while everyone else is being seduced by the charm and money and status of the clean cut American aristocrats.

\* As I mentioned before, I feel like Corey's reactions to things are frustratingly unnatural.  Not only does he not really react to his friend getting the shit kicked out of him, but then later in the story he blissfully attends the frat party hosted by Jon Lecey. If Tom knows that that is Jon Lacey’s frat how does socially connected Corey not know that?  Also, Corey needs a conflict.  I like that he is this energetic, optimistic, life of the party kind of guy, but, come on, that is never the whole story.  You need to round him out and give him something to fight for.  Whatever it is, to be a truly memorable character (as he deserves to be) he needs something to fight for or against. It could be the distance he feels from post-prison Tom.  It could be alcoholism.  It could be infidelity.  It could be trying to get over Tom and Kayla making out. It could be bringing the Lecey brothers to justice. It could be whatever. But I feel like it has to be something, or else Corey comes off like a shrill sort of one note melody.

\* The theme of victim and victimizer/ victim and attacker isn't fuller developed.  The dynamic that you set up for this theme is fantastic!  Tom is victimized by a situation in which he was the attacker/aggressor (at least in the eyes of the law).  This sets us off on an intriguing journey into the heart of this victim/aggressor theme which becomes even more complicated when you add in sex both as an act of violence and self-assertion (controlling another, possessing her/him, violating her/him as an act proving one’s superiority by forcing submission... oh, “sexual conquest” you are a rich theme, you devil you.), but then this dynamic also shows up in the politics of relationships.  Especially with Jenny and Tom, where the sex acts between them come out of this push and pull of submission and possession. The bar bathroom scene between Tom and Jenny is particularly complicated.  Tom uses violence (against himself) to coerce Jenny into a violent sex act, which is consensual, but brought on by Tom's anger and violence.  It's a sort of emotional violence against Jenny, who is later established as being a really needy person who has always been in the position of loving others without necessary receiving love back.  She's a victim, who willingly gives love, but doesn't receive love.  On this note I think you missed an opportunity when you blew over Jenny's meeting with her father, in that her father and Tom have a ton in common.  They are both drinkers, extremely self-involved, and unable to return the love to Jenny that she is pouring out on them.  In this way Jenny's father is sort of an older foil/mirror for Tom.  I think this could be developed more.

\* Another theme that you could develop more would be self-control.  You've already developed the theme of the importance of being a strong and independent "self".  From there I think you could do more with what a struggle it is to truly be a strong, disciplined, in control self.  The theme of self-control and self-discipline could be something to mine. Disciplined = strong self; undisciplined = non-self. To that end I think you could focus more on Tom's weight lifting and working out and on his drinking.  Drinking is interesting because it is used to lose one's self and yet it is always a point of pride among drinkers that they are "good drinkers" and can still control themselves even when they are wasted.  For me Tom's drinking and pill popping really make all of his self-righteous philosophy sound like embarrassing bullshit.  Which may have been your intention.

\* Another place this idea of self-control could be developed is in the story of Ray.  I found myself wishing that you would have taken us into Ray’s story a little deeper, possibly “showing it rather than telling it”, especially the scene where he kills his girl and her lover.  His message to Tom could be something about control, self-control, and the horrors that can follow if you lose self-control (since he loses all control of his life when he is imprisoned).  Or that revenge ain't worth it.  In life we've got to preserve self-control above all else: control of self = control of life. Also, Ray could do more writing in the story via letters to Tom. Since you have already established him as a great reader, he could also be a great writer (possibly through letters to Tom), which would be pretty progressive in that you would be presenting a black convict as the most authoritative literary voice in the story,

\* This idea of control and self-control could further be developed through all the other relationships in the story.  Tom and his friends/girlfriend, Tom and his parents, Tom and his enemies.

People use their looks, personalities, money, positions, etc, to exert control/influence over other people, which really brings up the difficult question of how we can live in society without having our selves compromised by being overly subjected to the control of others, or compromising other selves by overly controlling them.  To this end I feel like you papered over Tom's relationship with his parents too much.  First of all, I don't buy that a son would be hospitalized twice and neither of his parents would show up at the hospital.  Secondly, I see a lot of Tom's parents in Tom in that he is selfish vindictive, and sexually driven.  How really different is he than his father who uses his good looks, position, money, to screw secretaries?  At any rate I think you really need a confrontation or at least more contact between Tom and his parents.  It's hard to accept that they are just snakes.  The apple never falls far from the tree.  If they are snakes then Tom is at least a bit of a snake himself. This needs to be addressed.

\* Another issue I have is with the dreams. The chapter lead-ins contain some of the most beautiful, interesting, mysterious writing in the whole book.  They are really daring, but I think they need to be tightened up or else what is at its core starkm, emotional expression could deteriorate into mind-numbingly unfathomable psychobabble.  I think you should keep some of it.  Tighten it up into shorter tone poems, or almost like Haikus.  Beyond that I think you should dig into Tom's dreams more and give us more narration of them.  Dreams are a great way to give more concrete hints of the narration, subjective flashbacks, direct characterizations, and articulations of emotional states via action.  For example, you could describe Tom reliving the INCIDENT in his dreams over and over, each time it is slightly different, representing different emotional states.  For example in his dreams he is watching the "running girl", or he is chasing her, or he is raping her, or he is fighting off the assailants who also happen to be him, or Corey, or his father, or Jenny's father.  Or he is being attacked and raped and the "running girl" saves him.... etc.  etc.    You allude to Tom fantasizing about or rather being afflicted by images of violence and sexual violence, but it would be way more affective if you described these images through action in the narration either in the reality of the story or the dreamed reality of the story, to really make us feel what he is feeling; again, showing rather than telling.

\* In the end I think tying in the "running girl" into the whole arc of the story would make the ending more satisfying, since Tom’s reconciling with her, and even falling in love with her, would represent Tom's successful overcoming of his anger, victimization, lust for sex/violence, and his defeat of his enemies.

All right, so yeah, these are my thoughts on the story. Again, I tried to be opinionated and concrete, but to that end my hope is that my concrete opinions will be nothing more and nothing less than a sounding board for all of the ideas and effort you have put into this book. I’ve tried to share some ideas which in my opinion would make the story stronger and more commercial. Here’s hoping we can find some time to discuss some of my ramblings and your ramblings over a pint (or two... or three).

Best,

Aaron

05/03/2021

And what if was completely out of control. Maybe she was completely lost. She felt like she had to be lost to be found. She felt like she had to be overcome to become. She left like she had to be run out of her head to gleam some sense of clarity, some straight line, some settled obsession. These were the good veins. These were the opportunies. The flow channels. The place where life seemed most real, closest. Most intesnse, most real, most intimate, most articulate,most honest, most literate, most collected, most calm and most seething. Why did this have to threaten her health? Why did this have to threaten her sanity? Why did this have to threaten the balance of her being? Why was everything an existential crisis now? When did the balance of being become so precarious. When Did the natural suddenly become the most complicated act of synthesis ever achieved by a human being. Or just synthesis. Thesis- Anti-thesis- Synthesis. This is a powerful dynamic in our lives and history and culture. It is perhaps not the reductionist pathology tracing scalpel we wish it were, but it is an extremely helpful model for considering the perennial seething of each new generation, raised to consume and overcome and outlive the former though not the following. Was she afraid of death. She was not. Was she afraid of disorganization and nervousness and disorder and an inability to dig her way back out of the well. Where was she. How had she fallen so deeply behind the story process. She wanted to be a simple writer. Romance. Travel. History. Just enough detail and depth to make the experience seem substantial. Long wide frame shots or landscape. Movement observed and anticipated, waiting for and lingered on. Not the hyper helicopter and crank cuts of Tony Scott ‘s Spy Games and such. Robert Redford and Brad Pitt on a roof in Lebanon and techno music and about 10 cuts per second to ratchet up the nuance and intensity and rolling inevitability of the scenes conclusion. The student is breaking with the master. Going Ronin. Heading into the wilderness for love and honor. They are both right. They are both good men. They are on different sides of this thing.

12/23/2020

My hands smell like poop and cat food and the connecting skin between my fingers is white with criss-crossed dry lines. Fuck this shit—the poop and cat food smells suddenly conjure up memories of selling watches.

Last September (2019) the Explorer sale. Contacting and cajoling and extending and ending up exposed, possibly open to retribution, harassment—firing, condescension, withholding funds.

We have attempted to live with integrity. Pressure to capture every sale. Pressure not to sell to flippers, not to sell the wrong watch to the wrong person. To make the Big Boss happy. To make the client happy. My happiness was at best a third consideration—most times this meant suck it up, bite my tongue.

I am not blaming, I am looking for symptoms to trace back—I am looking for rivulets to follow towards the sea. Lines through the labyrinth, slightly sloping floors, steadily descending towards the source.

I am fearful that unaided I do not possess the wherewithal to work well.

12/19/2020

Mixing weed and alcohol like I sued to and to the point of intoxication that I would get to was never a good idea. I was ultimately a depressive— kind of became an addiction. I had no idea what I was doing then. I still don’t really know, but my sense of purpose is much stronger.

12/18/2020

Where is the line between crank and productive writer? Getting lost in one’s own maze… is it a must?

Me? No, I’m not crazy… I’m just a dude with his material and his plausibly balanced take on things.

I began a novel when I had settled back into Chicago on the top floor of an old stone three flat in Wicker Park. My writing was precious and scattered and not edited at all. I did not have the discipline to get into the work consistently, nor get back and edit it consistently. Develop it. I wanted a garden to grow a nourishing salad, but I didn’t want to weed. I didn’t want to plan or shop or consult. I didn’t know how to do these things or how to approach them without coming across as naïve or pretentious or soft-brained. I didn’t know what I was doing and I was afraid of both sounding like I knew what I was doing and sounding like I did not know what I was doing. I did not as yet fully appreciate what a commitment and sacrifice it was to pursue any kind of practice seriously— be it writing or running or sales or child-rearing. Fomo was real. Opportunity costs get expensive. Greatness spends a lot of time being average and good and very good, long before the full value of its greatness has been revealed. Thus, investments. Investing Talents. Burying them. Giving them away. Burning them. And our talents are effort and our talents are time.

It would have been interesting if I had gotten into programming at this time. I really should have. That whole crew of older North Park guys that I identified with had all gotten into Tech related fields including Ruby, though that meant nothing to me then and David Eads who always seemed like the smartest and most consciously woke and engaged friend was already deep in computers and Python and was setting up volunteer organizations to spread the love and opportunity and hardware and no how to handle the hardware and software, big advocate of open-source etc.

Things may have been very different. Perhaps betsy and I wouldn’t have made it. She might have been less enthusiastic about a Tech husband at that time. When I first met her in college she was already VERY annoyed about having to have a university email account. Perhaps I would have gotten a job in the Wicker Park area and began my Tech career right then and there. There would have been no summers in Florida teaching reading enrichment courses.

12/17/2020

In middle age the hens come home to roost. Your habits begin to wear on you. Defining you in ways you had not planned to allow them to.

Drinking had shifted for me somewhere in my 30s— the routine of it, volume, ubiquity, rhythm. Sporadic jogging campaigns helped to keep the Baker weight off and my 6 foot frame was a tall rack to hang my extra fat on, so my beer weight never really seemed too unseemly. The path to utter schlubbiness is slow and progressive it seems.

One beer a day is different than 3-4 +. My energy is different. My weight is different. I believe my sleep and concentration are improves and I know my diet is better when I am not drinking as much and then just eating whatever because I am drunk and everything that is salty and greasy tastes divine and real grade-A primo.

Shedding the stress of my ill-suited luxury retail career, finding purpose in coding, and time to write and compose more constructively and creatively and intuitively and unexpectedly than I have ever been able to compose. Hopefully, by the time you are read this I will have some fruit to share. At this point I am feeling enthusiastic about getting my orchard set up, planting trees, figuring out some repeatable processes for growing a bunch of them up and seeing what they produce. This process as a whole has always been elusive for me, a source of frustration and turmoil and self-recrimination— it doesn’t make sense that you don’t know how to go about doing something you supposedly love so much to do.

Before March of 2018 all things coding and computer were more the lore of occult knowledge than any sort of clear path out of my retail career cul-de-sac. Have never been super technical, but that spring after burning my year’s worth of vacation on a return trip to China with betsy and Esme and Susan and Micah (first time in 8 years!!) and faced up to the realization that we were not really open to moving back to China anymore, at least not while we were raising kids. Something about the way this realization hit me really helped me to I was finally buckle down and start looking coding square on as a potential career path. I began to learn Ruby.

The long, tough, but satisfying path that I have traveled with Chinese, definitely informed my thking about diving into a computer language like Ruby, that I had the impression was something that could be gotten into with a relatively low threshold of entry, but that would, if I stuck with it, take literally years to master or even get very good at.

12/15/2020

The over eager editor

* Gotta get it right right now.
* That is too much work, forget about it.

12/14/2020

I did not like my job and it made me feel shitty about myself and made me cut myself off from many things that I loved and that had previously sustained me. Despite my unhappiness I propped myself up on genuine bounty of my lively family life—my growing girls, my loving wife. We were holding things together, together. My wife cooked wonderfully and we would eat well and festively. I would often have a beer or two in transit from downtown to shake the drain of the day off—the battle, the physical sprint of it, the manic tick of it.

No matter how damn sweat you fucking fuselage is, you still have to hook that sucker to some sort of engine or you’re going to sick faster than you can say 1st class. Some engines are extremely powerful, but not very reliable, some are smooth and easy and relatively maintenance free and even some what effective, still others are dynamite and dependable, but demanding and involved to set up and maintain.

12/13/2020

Trying to teach somebody something that they are not open to learning is like trying to put a glove on a child who will not stretch the fingers from their fist.

The wife had a hard day yesterday. Her back felt very bad and her mood and psyche collapsed after it. As for me, I smoked too much weed and begrudgingly took most of the day off, though all I wanted to do the whole day was study Ruby.

12/07/2020

My clan joined a rival cults my own enthusiasm for any of the Martyr’s various cults was wanning. And so I left without leaving. And I did not follow where my parents went unlike all 5 of my siblings and their spouses. And now three of my siblings have three plus kids and are ‘straw poll’ by and large very socially conservative and not unsusceptible to the intoxicating war cries of White Christian Nationalism, though they may formulate the nexus of their rage slightly different.

“And Governor Nazi wants to trample all over everyone’s rights while her husband takes his girlfriend out on a goddamned pontoon!”

“They stupidly put wind farms in Texas and now they are frozen solid and not producing a gigawatt of power. Stupid!”

“And now They want bars0 open till 5 a.m. This after They are So concerned with public health and her mentality and what not. I’m telling you— the Ewoks are taking over the world! (I’m pretty sure she meant A-rabs, but I feel a little racist even making that correction.)”

I think my Grandmother’s consciousness peaked somewhere in the late 70s to mid-80s putting her disproportionately under the spell of Middle East Conspiracy theories and Star Wars references. She tended to garble the two in humorous ways from time to time in my topical passion. My grandmother did like to smoke a little weed didn’t she. Or at least her husband did. And then Debbie was such a stoner and her kids and Jason and Larry and Teddy and me and the Summersett girls and drinking and Hans and drinking and me and drinking and weed and dad’s weird kind of surreptious drinking which seemingly has played into my weed smoking habits. Obfuscate. Separate. Isolate. Corral. Abstract. Get with the program.

Not being in the cult suddenly put us in non-compliance with certain cult requirements of baptism, esoteric cult knowledge, attendance of cult meetings, private meetings with one of the cult leaders to share my darkness, having my off spring damped with cult water, following all cult protocol with regard to when and how and to where the semen from my body is released, ipso facto- having a bunch of children to be dampened with cult water unless of course I was not blessed by ITS SUPREMACY to have an orchard rich as Stashdar’s. Their cult affiliation has also, at least in their interpretation of the ancient cult texts (which many claim are simply update and reformed cult texts from even more ancient civilizations. Cults truly are remarkable, he remarked.

They seem to have deeply embraced this new cult. They have embraced the culture and teachings of this new cult with the zealousness of a Zentian Martyr. The are praying for me in my BACKWARDNESS and PAGANSIM. As my beliefs make me a heretic among my birth tribe, I am forced to be quite careful about how I express myself among my kin. This caution is tiresome and alienating. A seeming unending buffet of battles to choose from.

They pray to all parties including the father, the son, the holy specter, the immaculate incubator and a number of former and exemplar cult members whose lives somehow capture some aspect or even the fullness of that intangible life ordering goodness and even greatness of the cult. The power of its metaphors. The shallowness, but abundance of its language. The Dandelion was the symbol of the cult and every time we saw a flourishing cluster of Dandelion’s my family would look at one another knowingly reflecting on their flourishing.

Regardless of the fact that sure previously at certain times certain cult leadership-members may have been perceived to be a little soft on sexual predators in the pontificate despite penning a 900 page encyclical on human sexuality.

It was in fact a 12 DVD lecture series breaking down this 900 jumble of medieval fever dream into digestible Catholic Doctrinally sound sex rationalization. I have never subjected myself to this 12 DVD marathon, but was tempted to binge watch it in the GATHERING stage of composing this piece. That seems like a really big commitment of time. Perhaps we’ll skim the Wikipedia article of a few stray quotes.

“the body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God and thus be a sign of it.” JP II

I feared these DVDS like the VHS tape from “The Ring”. I’d wake up in cold sweats dreaming that I had watched the tape and be inexplicably compelled to become a raging White Nationalist Santorum Catholic devoted to Tucker Carlson (RIP RUSH! #dittohead4life)! A dunk into a theological acid bath that striped my slow coated Chicago-style big city liberalization off of me like the cheap veneer that it was.

12/04/2020

I believe that I can put crippling self-sabotaging self-doubt and self-recrimination and depression behind me, for they are on in the same, they are looping dumb eyed prediction of future failture, false roading, naivete, incomplete, stupid, turncoat, dyslexic, personality disorder, pathological liar, lazy, confused… the whole sick Bedlam Choral, but really what do I have to feel bad about? My plan is coming together despite me. I am inspired about books again! And music and writing are opening up to me in new and very positive ways. The process, the approach is becoming the point, a specific way of working that allows an end around or an end into art making, avoiding the too broad bullseye of unspecific “art making” . The process allows me to creatively follow whims while ensuring that I will accrue momentum building material for a variety of projects over time. I have internalized my practices of language and computing to the point where the work is simple the projects. Any idea or thought that I have can easily find a home in an existing project or if it does not and strikes me as something worth pursuing I can simply create a new file. Judgement is the key here. Having some intuition in what topics would be interesting to pursue and which ones have a lot of fertile material. If the material is there then piece on the topic will begin to pull mass to it. Once I am able to start spinning out finished pieces from the material— poems, short stories, novels, essays, letters, sketches, profiles, blog posts (writing, creating, tech, Chinese, heath (diet, stretching)— the full potential of the process will be realized. This will put me in a wonderful position to always have something (many things actually) stewing in the hopper. This feels like a more professionalized place to be with writing. Almost likem making candles or comething— you have a sense of the process and over time build a sense of the timelines required to complete the work. You plan your personal family economy around this rhythm and you build a career. What a nice thought and a clear, clean and simple plan.

12/02/2020

Can one escape this never ending cycle of guilt and recriminations?

What’s more interesting? What he’s trying to say? Or what comes out?

Simultaneously struck dumb by my apprehension to reveal my intelligence or my ignorance.

11/30/2020

The ghost riders on the elevated train head north on the 8:45 to Kimball. Downtown on the Metra, screaming, speaking, screaming, kids and money, if you don’t fight about these two things you should be pretty good. We don’t fight about these things and still find each other attractive and funny and creative and kind and thoughtful and we work together well, figuring things out, communicating through the challenges.

My substance use and abuse has put this balance and flow in jeopardy. I believe I now have my alcohol consumption under control. My once in 4 year binge sobered me up quite nicely. It was a super efficient collapse. Beer in hand along the strees back and forth to the grocery store. Be a drunk, but be a useful drunk. I am the Larry Johnson of the literary arts.

Drugs at times have answered my call for danger, excitement, adrenaline, urgency, unanticipated experience, self-space, ideological relief, inspiration, thought catalyzing. And yet, there is the inconvenient aspect of the habit which has led me to at times exhibit zero self-control with regards to controlling where and when I smoke, or rather continually pushing the envelope to smoke or handle weed in inopportune situations— trying to roll a joint on the sly in the back of the car with the windows up— being stoned and oblivious to how passe, rude, laidback, uninspiring my stoner mindset is making me. Fighting the rat race with rat poison? Trying to get ahead of the race by slipping below it. Not realizing how off target, or how unspecific my target was. How nebulous my goals were. The anxiety and the fear that people cultivated, extend, refuse or fail at releasing, letting go, informs their goals and ambitions. If you smother those with chemical calm, then where are you left, or if you are left feeling like some of that static has been mitigated, how do you continue to interface with people who are operating on a different frequency. How do you keep from getting your signals crossed up all the time.

But now I just want to be quiet and nostalgic and see windows illuminated with holiday lights. Smoke until the theatrical sense returns. The significant contrasts of light. The 10% elevated to the 110%. All theories. All possibilities enter the chain of thoughts, but in a staccato rambling tumult, unhinged, muttering, swearing at the uncanny memories that return— fanciful and cardboard, undetailed, flaccid, lifeless, inchoate bellowing emotions, one against the other in an unrehearsed chorus of pre-madonna divas. The intensity is there, but what about the harmony, the technique; can you harmonize the low and high, the false and the true?

Zing my grey matter keen.

Keen my grey matter zingier.

11/29/2020

And he vowed this would be the last time. No, this time. No this.

Depressed and self-medicating and had been for a long time exactly because I had not been doing what I felt passionate about. I worked, but I did not feel passionate about my work. I felt passionate about providing for my family and to that end I did care about doing a mgood job and building my business and taking care of my clients, but over time my allegiance to my clients increased and my allegiance to management became stretched, abused, taken for granted, seemingly actively discouraged. My experiences in the luxury watch industry will be invaluable to me once I get some distance from it.

He checked his mood meter and dismayed.

We have this ancient *Do/More* branded office chair— I love it and it sometimes depresses the hell out of me. I have lived in the city and functioned in the city and been sad and fell out with my family— grew apart. Its not my fault— they are not all conservative Catholics whose lives seem extremely fraught and chaotic and getting together with them does not seem super appealing given our precarious economic and vocational state, the pandemic, and the resulting tenuous mental health of both betsy and I. In a plane. Free falling. Leaving that which is no longer necessary behind. Purging who parts of my brain that I no longer need access to. Releasing conditioned tensions and unraveling contentious relationships. Forgiving. Self and others. Our limitations are not to be hated. Our brilliance is circumscribed by all the normal human shit that in and of itself can be pretty despair inducing. How to take the shit and pant with it. How to contain the shit, make systems for the shit.

Horse drawn wagons carrying receptacles and pumps to travel the streets of Paris in the night pumping out the shit and piss and vomit and old food and whatnot that collected in each apartment blocks septic tank. The shit has always been there. We have just had better or worse means of dealing with the shit. Feeling overwhelmed. Feeling unconfident that I have the wherewithal to pull the plane up in a timely fashion.

I have 17 nieces and nephews on my side of the family and not a single god son. I have been excommunicated from the family. Put in a situation to “self-exclude” from the Catholic celebration calendar because I am not Catholic. My family is more than I can handle. My family is more than my family can handle. I have a hard time putting up a stress firewall with my family and I don’t like what it does to me emotionally and mentally. My shadow exile. Distanced geographically, religiously, politically, culturally, linguisiticaly, rhetorically…

11/25/2020

1.5 Hazy IPA; 1.5 Sapparro; 1.5 IPA; 1.5 IPA; 1 Pale Ale’ 1 Pale Ale; .5 Pale Ale, .5 Two Hearted, 1 Milk stout.

11/24/2020

I pay $85 per year for a Divvy bikeshare membership. Thus, I always have a stead stashed a few blocks away max. I rarely drive in the city. My wife is our city driver. I am the out of town long hauler, typically the one to get us up to Michigan or out to Indiana or Tennessee and back. I think this sends a good message to the girls to see their mother driving and their father riding shotgun. My father never road shotgun, my father-in-law never road shotgun. Ever. When he passed out at breakfast on a high desert plain in Montana the day before we were to drive into Yellowstone we had to do some pretty persistent convincing to get him to hand off the van keys to his eldest son (who was 48 at the time).

This was 2008 and my Grandfather had just passed away. I had written him a short letter when he was very sick and I had felt good about the letter and he had liked it, appreciated it and had tried to write me back, it sounded like it was going to be some sweeping memoire of his life. It said he was the Jesuits man and that he felt like there was a generation gap between us. This was obviously true. He was good with birthday cards. We stood in the kitchen and awkwardly chatted about college football. He spoke in this very composed, collected, clinical way. He seemed bemused a lot. He would chuckle. He had a deeper voice than you would expect (in my memory). He was raised under the weight of Freud. Not super comfortable with hugging people, intimacy.

A bit soused again.

Skull light and buzzy

Used to be fun, drowning on the couch like this

Everything amplifying everything else.

My lack of vocational clarity and trajectory has been a great source of existential anxiety for me. Acepting this mantel, this pressure, embracing it, enveloping it in our practices, structuring life such that your practices drive things— your habits lead the way, you are not working on automatic, but you are working in an agile way on things that you are automatically interested in.

Weed has to become ceremonial again.

You are an alcoholic. You have this on both sides of the family. Fucking deal with it.

Annette, Michael, Jason, Teddy, Larry, Nina, Jody.

Reboot with alcohol. Fuck that routine. Stop being even an every day drinker.

I am right on that precipice of “do I need help”. The 25th was fucked up. I am feeling much recoved, but still not back into my yoga positive mind set.

11/23/2020

His body felt tense in the cold bed and he wondered when she would come to bet. Her warm mass in the mess of the sheets would shift his weight towards herr.

And I remember wanting to have a girl to take naps with and I found one and it was tumultuous. Mother, high school, college, oscillating confidence, screw down and get into and figure out, reaching out for some larger vision, enlarging vision, but really, you know what, who knows. Trying like some desperate Dan to rhapsodize your world into some kind of order. Spin a rag-quilt out for the masses.

11/22/2020

He hadn’t smoked in the morning and his head felt clear, though his mother’s text had still annoyed him when she had texted him about his mystery cousin. 50 years old— son of now dead uncle Doug or Craig or whatever, conceived in 1970 or 1969 and never met his biological uncle, my uncle, before my uncle’s death in 2003.

He died in the spring and I did shrooms with Stephen and Luke instead of attending his memorla service thing which was to be small and I felt kind of drawn there to be with my mother, but also didn’t really feel like there was much of a connection between doug and me and the rest of the family. Doug individually yes, but connected to the family, not as much. So we had done shrooms and we played dominoes – “5s” and the artist that had mady all those wild layerd images that I started to get lost in like strange intergalactic space stations, Escher inspired labrithyns of shapes and connections, suggestions and possibilities. Was his name 5ive? We had granola which I had made and had been proud of making because at that point in my life I did not make all too many things and did not feel super impowered to. What is that dopey limitation we put on ourselves to block us out from really accessible things. Derivative- not so accessible, but granola, not so hard. It had Thunderstormed as Stephen had predicted it probably would and I was incredibly paranoid and afraid of the lightening as we sat on the front porch and watched it explode and flash before us with a tremendous waloop of thunder right behind it.

My dead uncle visited me in the form of a three foot high Dia de los Muertos effigy skeleton effigy and we listen to the Mojave 3 and we sat in the living room feeling the mystery of the streets— the proximity of our neighbor— the uniqueness of our own headspaces— celebrating our subjectivity— up all night— burritos the next day feeling strung out and happy and befriended— a year later I would be riding a camel in the desert in China after having spent the summer in Florida, the fall in Berlin, and having moved in Xi’an China at the beginning of the spring. This must have been 2004, no?

Angry at your ill sentiments

Your sultanic obsession—

The excrement of thieves collected cake like.

The disbelieving Drew Brees chameleon daughters

We’re smarter than your average martyrs, but still not starters.

He was punny. He was a very fucking punny guy.

My puniness is a symptom of a shit lit diet.

11/20/2020

People doing creative things, speaking creatively, speaking in creative ways, interacting, not just collapsing in upon one’s self, which is where I have been,

unbelieveably so to some extent. This compression.

Seeking out the alms and the hand-me-downs

As we clown our way around

To some round about form of self-expression

Why even make a thing of it?

Why not just be wise and get on with your life?

Don’t piss your wife off

Getting pissed on your night’s off

Drink and drank

Sink and sank

Stink and stank

Polled the rank and file

They ruled, was vile

Once a motherless child

Reviled with no false alternative

Cursed to furnish the worthless mirth

At the company picnic.

The worst world’s first

A great big pagan revue

Living in a garden apartment

Bumping Aphex Twin

Considering my alternatives

Worldly perfect, perfectly bred,

Mistaken for a lady, all her lies well-tred

All the lies stripped of their tread.

All his wives leavening their bread.

All his concubines perfuming his bed.

11/18/2020

Back in January (1/31/2020) I had set a goal: 10,000 words a week and 25 miles. 10,000 and 25 seemed very reasonable to me. One long run a week would knock out a good chunk of the mileage and a string of solid, quite mornings would blow though my writing quota without too much strain. Plus, the discipline of it would give some ballast to my hyped up sales life. Sitting and thinking or maybe reading and sitting and writing in the morning before the second or third cup of coffee and the three flights down and two blocks to the train, two flights up, five stops to Belmont, fingers crossed that the transfer will be there to walk across the plateform to, then three stops to Clark, and three or four flights up from the underground and a three quarter’s mile hustle along Division or Elm to State and then Oak. And then my workaday sprint up and down the three stories of story front we occupied on the most exclusive shopping street in the city. I spent my day mostly standing or bounding up and down the stairs or striding the impossibly long distance to the back of the store, where my many responsibilities would draw me in an uncomfortable and imbalanced amount of time. More coffee throughout the day. Oh, someone brought donuts, how nice. And then off work and hustle home. Pound a tall boy and a bag of potato chips in the park outside the Newberry Library, like the chips and the beer on the train to Grand Rapids, wobbly on your feet bumming cigarettes in the Michigan summer night. And later trying to get cigarettes from that gas station that had just been rammed by a minivan. We went somewhere else and the clerk kind of put his arms up and shrugged at the mess all around him. We smoked cigarettes and talked about what, what… I have no idea what we talked about, but it was nice to hang out and drink beer and smoke cigarettes like a gang of beatniks after an earlier drunk on the train and taking pictures of the landscape and writing in my journal and journeying on and on without a destination.

Tried to get some reading in last night— but just felt tired again— just felt the oblivion of the night descending upon me and so I followed her into the depths and in the depths I while away the early A.M. hours on our green cat-scratched couch.

Writing, including details as they bubble up— suggest themselves, you know, what can you say to art— the million choices that go in to all that you would like to make— and some make and make it— and other fall apart angry and shitty— bitched out and mother consumed— you called the Governor a Nazi, you floated out highly debatable assertions into national conversations on race and equality and the like— social justice.

I want to fly over the tropes and the traps of white liberation. We cannot help but be sucked into the politicking of the moment though can we…

Would love to say that I only do politicks in the even of all out war.

Politicking is all about dividing. Setting up camps. Securing funding. Using the scalpel and the sledgehammer of language to railroad the conversation inti a narrow set of clear choices— it is the opposite of reality and the opposite of the free market— a proliferation of choice, ultimate choice, ultimate competition.

In the political arena there have been concerted efforts by both parties to restrict the “free market” of the political system— there certainly has been much written about this. I accept that we have a system— I recognize that it is limited and imperfect and I accept that.

Otters have a pocket for their favorite rock.

11/16/2020

And YES! we waste time combing through some “insignificant” notes from 4 years ago, but there is something rich there. Something tragic about talent, and popularity and celebrity and violence. And fascinating/horrifying Florida. Orlando where the three closest restaurants to my apartment were McDonalds and I was alone and car commuting and hiding from the heat with the air-conditioner blasting frost on all the windows when I was out for the day that one time.

Could expand on that tragedy- she was a contestant and third place finisher on that show *The Voice*. Before that prominence she had been a youtube celebrity and after the voice she seemed to be managing her career well. And then a super fan who had had dental work and hair plugs put in and the traveled to Orlando from his far flung Florida home and shot the woman as she was spreading her arms out to embrace him. He shot her three times and then shot himself dead after struggling with the original victims brother and then breaking free. Very sad. Her mother died two years later from cancer. All in all a pretty tragic family, no? Who was this crazy guy though? Why do people do that kind of stuff? What happens between the bad feeling and the bad action. That is the shadow. That is the shadow, I know I know…

11/14/2020

My programming backlog has me feeling full low.

Caught in a moment unable to embrace the familial warmth all around.

Conflicted about when to work, when to play, a very old story, no?

Hating Saturday for its ambiguity and seen from both ways-ness

Caught up wrestling with this other mind, this Saturday mind,

Suddenly only half-convinced of the wisdom of the mission.

No, that’s not it, it’s all or nothing, it’s ***Alles oder Nichts!***

Tired of this Saturday mind. Tired of feeling conflicted about time

And space and religion and politics . How can it all be so tiresome despite all our dear technology… or perhaps so tiresome because of it. The ubiquity. The pumped into our house-ness. Way more invasive than anything George Orwell cooked up for 1984 back in 1948.

What’s the point of any of this other than to play our part? I personally like my part and think it is a very good one. I have a good one. Satanic self-ness my mother says— as I faulter in the green of her fundamentalist dream kingdom. And I am rubbing smoke and sparking aggression. Feeling the false energy in my bones— nervous system— because the night expands only and does not contract and death is the hunter of the infinite night.

11/03/2020

Smoking a joint out on the side porch in the mid-day, sweet Marcel is curious and lurks around. Ella the downstairs cat is cuddled up somewhere feeling sore. According to local legend, she once saw another cat out a window and was forever deeply traumatized. It really fucked her up. Anna is in the garden thinking long thoughts on intersectional projects. Haas downstairs barking his gruff Haas bark. Bari is down the street at her page and book binder shop. Ellen is at home grieving writing poems that heal a wound by owning it, by honoring it, by carrying it, by holding it near, by allowing you, at some point to draw you to others, with that new certainty of our aloneness and the deep compassion that wells up in your heart for the people all around.

Dealing with your shit. Getting it out. Purging it, because you have to now. Because you are older now and can’t carry it around anymore. What does it mean to truly release this? Reach a baseline and come to terms with your own existence, your own mistakes, wasted days, how to you gather the gumption to carry on, and with style.

And there it is… that yearning again, that desire, longing, that openness that eludes me still.

My shamanic process has delivered me to a distant shore, but wait there’s more

11/01/2020

What to make to these inchoate feelings? What to make of these inchoate times?

You could encapsulate this last month as my super-hero origin story. Some good montage material in there: piles of crumpled yellow legal pad paper, furtive pot fueled writing sessions while the girls are at the park, returning to find my showered and toothbrushed and visined, hacking at my Taiwanese laptop, furtive scribbling on the aforementioned yellow legal pads, coding, note taking about code, pushups until my pecks complained, running until my Achilles heal gave out, drinking beer after 5 with betsy, sneaking beers after runs, while washing the dishes, here and there, breathing— weed and writing led me to Hatha yoga.

Time does not stop, but I lose my finely delineated place on the timeline, my vector in space, my spine once reasonably aligned starts to overreact, working like an abacus under fidgetly, nicotine stained hands, tabulating my crimes. Unwind? How about drink till were blind. I’ll find a poet’s oath on the other side of reasonable. I’ll take my place upon the bar stool, beside a cadre of other unrealized purveyors of the written word. Oh, to make seem spontaneous and causal a compression of my decades of struggle and wasted time and mistakes.

11/26/2019

And what just happened was me writing.

What just happened was me allowing myself to write.

Writing is good.

Writing is blind.

Writing is a salve.

Something to call up the dead.

Something to breathe life into the living.

Each sentence a complete and crafted **message** onto itself.

I want to believe that if I can just use this spreadsheet every day, I will have a better handle on my life. I don’t want to be out of control. I feel out-of-control or at least set on a certain trajectory. That anxiety one feels when you can’t seem to shake your anxiety. I can write myself out of this if I work hard to write myself out of this.

7/1/2019

Let’s call it a comeback. Not sure when my last productive time of writing was. My creative writing class in college stands out as a time when I was finishing stories. What did I write? I wrote about being on the boat and I wrote about the world without icons and I wrote about *Let Bygones Be Gorgons* I wrote about my trip to the west coast and I pulled real details from my life and then I sprinkled in some stilted dialogue and some pointed description. They came together well enough that my professor printed out a list of the top 10 creative writing programs in the country and encouraged me to apply. And what did I do. I graduated and went to MN and wrote not a single finished story despite the fact that I was surrounded by people that also had ambitions to write- literature, songs, etc. I smoked a lot of pot that summer. I took mushrooms for the first time. And then I saved up enough money to go bum around Europe for a while and while I was there I wrote a fair bit I wrote vignettes about places I went and things I did. And I began to sense a great emptiness in me. A lack of talent. A lack of drive. A lack of confidence. I had an identity that I could have pursued through training or more diligent execution, but instead I dithered and I played at being a writer. I was a twenty-something hobbyist.

In Germany I wrote. I wrote a little bit about Roosterhead that was inspired by a vision I had at a flea market of a seedy urban neighborhood dimly lit by red lights in the rain and the camera panning along the shabby façades of the buildings and down toward the smoky, beat glamor of a Chinese restaurant decorated with heavy fabric cloths and tapestries, all decor saturated by cigarette and cigar fumes. The camera follows a path through the restaurant to a back room where we find our hero placcid at a table alone. He has feasted, the remnants of a half dozen dishes are scattered on the wide round table. Roosterhead smokes a cigarette and with his black, beady eyes regards the a picture of a 1940s Chinese pinup girl on the wall. He exhales and a smoke ring debonairly floats across the table and forces its way into the nicotine saturated wall.

I have attempted to write stories and been caught in a room. Caught in my own room. The nothingness of the thoughts in my head. The nothingness in the thoughts in my head. All content that is volition without substance. My mother returning to me in thoughts- this invalidating figure. A figure in whose eyes I am ultimately a failure as a person. Is this the Catholic world view? How did you view non-Catholics? How do I view Catholics? How can I truly integrate with my Catholic family? Read more G.K. Chesterton or some shit like that?

We have lived beside this sea for many decades, many days.

The white sands contain stories that have been lived and will be lived again.

We walked into the night and took our time unwinding the long string of misunderstandings that have come to define my life.

The damage that was done was done.

The creature in the night was close.

The weaselly mutant breathed with wretched exhaustion.

The time has come for us to throw caution into the wind.

The time has come to become.

The morning has come to be loved.

It is time.

And I do love this morning. I love the close breeze and the softness of thoughts that accompany it. I love the holy ghost distractions that reach into my consciousness and screw out the bellowing wind. The ghost distractions of our dearly departed dead. The past. We will write for the past people. We will write for the past truth seekers. I cannot image another day spent in this hell. This unknowing. This uncommitted existence. And these are rambling words with shades of truth. We pack up and move to Duluth. We summer in Eagle Harbor. Let’s just do a couple of weeks. It would be rough because we couldn’t swim. But I would go there and write and live my life in an Andrew Wyeth painting where my most striking aspect would be the absence that I conjure up.

I have given up the ghost. I have removed myself from the canary road existence to attempt to enter into tradition. All the traditions coming to me in a dream and you beating on a drum to scare my demons out. And if we could actually get there then gorgeous. If we could actually get there then lovely. If we could actually get there then bangarang and roombadoom howdy do.

I can’t call you my brother without you getting inside my head.

I can’t call you my sister without you getting inside my head.

The fragrant memories that you have traded for a life in the war department.

The standard fictions that the mother of your children sold you to become the mother of your children.

The cynical fascists that control everything with their power. Their money. Their penal pride.

And why the coarseness? Why the crudeness?

Why the manic approach of the spiteful, cruel charm that was supposed to be my hero amulet.

I should have been a better person for you. Instead I was a cynic and a shit. I fucked up and brought this shit down on myself. We got to the other side of Ashland and that was enough to be prideful. We had done something that some other people hadn’t down, now weren’t we something pretty? Weren’t we something artful? In the hall the winner from ’03 is drunk and ignored his promise has sprouted spores of mold and his breath is acrid with the prophecies of another world.

And the poetic spirt, humanity. The surge of breath in life. The life and death in surging. The time that encompasses it all. What did I read about time from Einstein… something about all time being cosmic time. Something about time being the fabric of the universe. And suddenly we are considering time. Time something that we cannot escape. That we measure and analyze and reassess and all of these strategies are what they are. This and no more. I cannot call you back. I cannot call you back. I am a grown man in the service of the king. We do not need to be here of course. Sharp winds and moving picture shows. We want to find something for him. And is that what it takes. His father moved in here once upon an evening. His mother moved in here once upon an evening. And they paved the way and they weren’t supportive of me becoming a lawyer at all really. Well kind of in a passing sort of way. And I told them that I wanted to use the extra time to write and I don’t think I did much writing then with the exception of writing a few letters. I remember having a long phone conversation with Justin and telling him that I would retire before he would despite the fact that I would be going back to school for three years. There are so many things to do now. There are so many things to do. And do any of these things mean anything at all. These words represent something that we have never seen before. These words represent something that I have never known before. We climb to the top of the Eiffel Tower and jump. We fly from the top of the Eiffel Tower and out over the lights of gay Paris. We are living in this incredibly connected world and our loneliness has never been greater. Though I don’t know that is true. I have known loneliness. I have know ghostly fan fiction that I have hacked out to get my darker emotions out into the light of day and I have hacked out my happier emotions to get my good emotions out into the light of day. I can live in this world with you. I can live in this world with you. Making choices and making eyes at the temptations of the day. I want to live and be productive and be creatively engaged and yes there will of course always be struggles and conflicts, I don’t think the human consciousness can function without those. Buddha lack of desire shall take you to the other side of the moon. We are moving into the future. Beating on a drum. Beating on a canyon of dreams. I know that you love me and I love you and I am falling asleep in the conception of myself as someone who loves you more than you love me. I can’t possibly love you alone and broken and as if to prove the point plaintive Polish pop music comes floating on the minor keys up from the back courtyard where the Polish carpenters greet the morning with their grinding ban saws, as the old structure gives way to the new.

07/14/2021 the open sore wound that you’d been carting around, from whence the puke hued pus came bubbling up, a yellow river to wash your cares down, overcoming the banks of your defenses

07/12/2021

Surrendor-- commit to doing this sober, he says as he reaches for his vape pen.

06/02/2021

Drank too much coffee. Esme can’t get on the internet and is sulking. Helena is screaming in her raspy, impatient, soul ruffling voice -- *Dad! Dad!* *Help me!*  She has climbed up somewhere she shouldn’t have, she’s in a tight spot, betsy moves around the apartment silently-- what has she been doing? I wonder when she’ll take the girls out. I am slogging through the never ending stream…

Tension from mother and father-- both religious, economic, and political. Trump and the right have just totally thrown off decorum and are embracing their grievances and life-dissatisfaction by blaming the government. My daughters are needy-- food, clothing, nurturing, wherewithal that I don’t have as I try to process through my mental unraveling and attempts to code and write. I am isolated, but I am attempting to stitch my unhinged world back together, attempting to overcome this incredible fragmentation and distraction that I feel. Attempting to follow this long process of letters and infinitely accumulating material in the Yellow River, the Infinite Notebook, the softheaded sludge of my collecting backlog of silty cycling observations. All in a heroic act of meaning creation.

07/02/2019

And I didn’t have a single morning like this last month. Morning, soft morning, the airplanes off to where, where. Plato communicates through the ether of time. Poetry immoral? Unmanly? Poetry and reveling in that which we would be ashamed or embarrassed to do in our own lives, but as audience members we praise the emotion and passion, even while in our own lives we suppress and control. What is good for the city of ourselves?

That’s an interesting metaphor. The self as a city. How are you living? How’s the mayor doing. You could extrapolate on that and run with that- the self as a city. The self as the city. How is your personal economy doing? What was your past, what does the future hold?

And while I am very pleased to be up this early and set up and typing (I was up at a quarter to 6:00 and showered and made coffee and got Helena up, who woke up early herself and is now sleeping on the floor), I feel tired and hot already in this chair. I don’t have a work desk, work table and that is some pretty annoying shit. I don’t know if I have enough energy to do any of this. I am old, I have always been old. Thinking of the will. Thinking of peace. Thinking of work. Thinking of grace. Did this kid have a divorce or something?

These fucking unobtainable objects of desire, which they make well. Which they call out and catch shit for. I am not going to go there. My stoner mind wondering the streets of my derelict cty.

And all of this morning shit, feeling the morning weakness in me and all I come away with is a metaphor. My metaphor is losing its steam. My steam is losing its drumbeat. My drumbeat is losing its reality. I need to get the financial stuff on the computer so that I know what I am looking at. But that is a big part of the city isn’t it- a big part of the city is the financial well-being of the city. The financial well-being of those dependent on the city. We try to make the best of it. We try and do our best. I am losing myself in this process. I am finding myself.

Betsy met me downtown last night with the girls. They arrived right on time as we were leaving the store. Betsy and Esme and Helena. This is our family, this is our city- Betsy and Esme, Aaron. I am feeling pissed off. I am feeling hot I want to be at repose and relaxed and work but I know that I have to work hard and dig and push and scrap and hustle. Work, work, work. Oh, but to have the vision to choose the work that suits you. I should have been a counselor in high schools of the boreal universe. And that shit didn’t make any sense but it felt good coming out and now I am distracted by my rambling birth and I am here and I am not here. My ability to concentrate feels shot. I feel tired and full of shit- literally, literarily. I liked that pun yesterday Sub-bourbon Mom. She speaks with a tragic confidence. Declaring her late night TV show roster as if it were some kind of an accomplishment, a pedigree. This self-deprication is intended to what? We are mindful of the morning. She calls to us and we find her and I am up with her attempting to sooth her. We are drinking coffee, but we should be drinking water. It’s fucking hot already and the day hasn’t even begun yet. My little baby daughter is sleeping on the floor and I am shirtless and squishy bellied and belly aching. There are many ways to be in this world. There are many ways to be in this world.

And Siagon fell and my baby is sweet. And Saigon fell and the Americans abandoned Vietnam and Saigon fell on April 30, 1975.

Greenwich Village was a place, unlike the military, where he didn’t need to adjust he could just hang out. David Blue is who I’m rambling about whose real name was Stuart David Cohen. All these hep cat Jews knew what they were doing. Or did they? Did they live in this same world or pleasure and pain? Did they die of heart attacks at the age of 41. Did they get good at doing drugs and running around with fools. What is the best Dylan biography. *Down the Highway*, *Behind the Shades*, *No Direction Home*.

What is the point of all of this? Maybe I need more exercise, because right in this moment I feel ineffectual and hot and stupid and lazy and the weight of the wasted years makes me want to just get high and play Uno with my daughter. But why can’t the weight of the wasted years, just make me want to be sober and play Uno with my daughter. Nothing really matters all that fucking much. I need to get that money situation figured out. I have that information somewhere. I don’t have to be fucking sheepish about any of this shit. I don’t have to be sheepish about any of it. I just need to be clear about where I am going and what I am doing and be me and do the things that I do and grow in the way that I can grow and let go of the things that I can let go. I am living. I am alive. Just by living, just by being alive I am succeeding. These things are unclear to me. Did they say these porches were all right? We attempted to make good on promises that we used to make to people. Dear Jesus let us expand. Dear Jesus let us grow. I am falling asleep in my pure belief in justice. I am falling asleep in my pure belief of truth. Hand me the keys to the kingdom and I shall return you to your youth. The intertexuality of all of it seems important. A letter of encouragement to my brother would be nice. Just being able to sit down and write a letter to someone without it making me feel depressed. Just being able to write a song without feeling depressed.

Just being able to kick the can down the road without feeling depressed. I am fighting depression. I am fighting death. I am fighting flaccidness. I am fighting heartache. I am fighting for the ability to listen to music and be free. I am looking for a way out of here. I am looking for a way to be free. Here we go banging away at the same old intertextual theories that I don’t know what I am talking about. A clear head. A head of ideas. Stoned I come up with something to share. I wish I had some green right now to help me appreciate the morning. Instead I am just sweating and feeling the limitations of my endocrine system. People don’t talk to me. People don’t remember me. People meet me in the street and beach the sideways looks I cast at them. An assuredness that is absurd. A sense of divine certainly. What about beer in the morning? What about a place to answer the day back to me. And I know that the see is only crossed with discipline and that is what I am seeking here. But obviously I am lacking something (as I crack a beer at 8 in the morning with the sun encroaching on my and my floor sleeper and the cat moves through the apartment with lithe feline moves.

What is the end game here? To just be a literary cat- somebody who reads and writes and engages with the written word in a robust way. Somebody that accepts the yolk of work and supports his family the best that he can. Somebody that is disciplined enough to keep my affairs in order and get through the day without getting fucked up. There is nothing wrong with a buzz me thinks. There is nothing wrong with a buzz me thinks. I like to imbibe alcohol in small quantities at strange times. How can I write my brother a letter? How can I do that? Well, you stupid mother fucker, you could certainly just sort of fucking sketch it out and the fill it in over time and when you have it all together you will be done and then you can put it in an envelope and address it and put a fucking stamp on it and send it off to the motherfucking ends of the earth or wherever you want it to go. I want to be that guy that writes 3,000 words a day. Some nerdy fucking guy in my creative writing class in college intoning like he knows shit what the fuck was his name Ben and did I ever find out if there was any connection there. I don’t think I did. Or did I. I was the connection Ben Seederburg or Cedarburg or Seedyburg and so forth. And he is a charming man and confident about what he knos and he pushes and pushes and pushes and I am climbing up and over the top of the road. And are talking about ways that we can get through to the other side of this island. And I am sleeping in the middle of the silent seas and I am calling you back. I am calling you back into the middle of the moon. I am in the middle of the moon and beating the street up. I can’t catch up to where you have been. I am lost in this race against myself. I am lost and trying to push myself to win. And only day two into the month I am drinking at 8 a.m. and the polish music starts and the planes fly overhead and the AC unit drones incessantly. Droning incessantly. Who wrote that first? And if we are going to copy it at least we can acknowledge that we are copying it. And if we are going to work, at least we can focus on working. And if we are going to do shit, then why don’t we just do shit.

I ran to the desert to be near the end of the world.

I ran to the desert to be in the know.

I ran to the desert to learn from the sun.

I ran to the desert to know your dry naked skin.

I ran to the desert to forget my arctic existence.

I ran to the desert to pun my way free.

I ran to the desert to force my mind open.

I ran to the desert to simply be.

I ran to the desert to eat milk and honey.

I ran to the desert penance to seek.

I ran to the desert my boldest ambitions before me.

I ran to the desert to escape being weak.

I ran to the desert my mother to forgive.

I ran to the desert my heart to

That smart girl I knew. That smart girl I half pursued. Left to our own devices at the end of the year. Where did she go now and didn’t she care. She spoke to me without interest. She spoke to me without fear.

The heart only knows what it knows.

The heart only knows its own scars.

Ambivalence is an unnatural volition;

even the stars break on the side of hope casting their light magnanimously,

radiating starsong out and out long after their collapse.

(long after they are dead/long after they have died)

And this is it all meta and shit. One beer in my gullet, feeling refreshed. I don’t know that two beers would move the needle much. I don’t know that sloppy drunk before noon looks good on me. I don’t think we can make this about me. I don’t think we can make this about yo. I don’t know if these momentary lapses can get through to the other side. I call my friend. I break on the side of hope. Take me to the garden. Take me to the street. I am leaving this kingdom without a single night of sleep. We have been reviewed and we have been moved. We have grown old, we have done exactly what we are supposed to do. We have dwelled in uncertainty. We have mo0ved through with the good. I am lonely in the middle of the room beating chaos on the father figure good. And we work together and we deliver that which has been. I am a lonely shop keeper with a secret stash of gin. Good times come and good times go. My hopper is empty, my consciousness shot. My day ending well, my day ending flush. We speak to the earnest crush worthy moratorium of the blue eyed daughter factor that had made your heart proud. You took the money to the people and they returned it to you with interest. You took the money to the people and the returned it with scorn. People in the papers- the obituaries, the athletes. Nothing in this world shall be complete. Nothing in this world will call me home. Nothing in this world will need what I need. Nothing in this world will give what I give. We can’t find our lives without giving up ourselves. We can’t call the men without giving up ourselves.

I kind of feel like if we can make 1 out of every 3 three pointers that we shoot then we win. Is that how the world works. What about defense? 3 and D. When I was in high school I had no idea what 3 and D was. I got myself into too much foul trouble because I was too slow and not smart enough. This shit is going to blow me up. This shit is going to strip me down. I feel ripped on this existence. And I half think about grabbing a beer from the fridge, but it would be my second beer of the morning and that sounds excessive. I should be drinking water. It is hot and the day is early. We will have many things to do today. We will? What the fuck do we want to do today. I need to look into betsy’s account and see about getting my name on it and getting Helena and Esme as beneficiaries and I need to get my 8000-10000 credits invested in it. I don’t think any of this shit matters. This mother fucker is all about these luxury watches. Which is great, but what the fuck? Is there not anything else that might be more interesting to him. Working with children? Giving back? Living the high life? Getting high? Doing drugs? Doing Meth? Fucking women who don’t know their names? Fucking women who don’t know their names. The Latter Day Saints come and greet me with suspicion. I am lonely in the moment and I am falling asleep in my good intentions. Breaking away from production to simple jack myself off and feel good about the radiating pleasure from my loins. I need to step away. I need to be in the prison of myself and appreciate what it means to be free. Am I a dumb shit? What do I seek? What do I need? I feel fucking wounded in this moment. I feel like Christ himself has come down and burnt me with his tongue of fire. I am needful of so many things and the earnestness of my plea won’t get me anywhere. The earnestneess of my please won’t get me fucking anywhere. Time keeps moving in me and all I can do is attempt to create modes. Modes of being that are sustainable. Modes of being that will develop the skills that I would like to have in this life. Modes of being that I can play with through the years and share with the people that I love and strengthen the bonds that I have made. I need to believe. I need to grow. I need to give. I need to grow. I need to black the pageant our of the medicine cabinet. I really am not that tragic. I am a man. I am a white man. I am a white American man. In many ways I have a lot going for me historically. What said there have been a lot of really shitty white American men.

Looking through the Riverside book last night at the Pharmacy (the 5 and dime really, what else can it be, before big pharma, before car became king and kicked us all to the curb. I try to climb out of this situation with my intellect intact. I try to crawl out of this situation with my back still relatively straight. I try to crawl out of this situation with my honesty breaking along the lines of the system. I am a broken daughter of a corrupt ring of slaves. I am an asshole. I am a knave. We move through the ghost chorus of the sea inside. We demand resolution, we demand resolution. We need you to confide in me that we weren’t your hurt son. We need to demand that we get a better deal than we have now. We need to demand that we get a hero’s welcome. We need to demand that the sun does not burn out our eyes when we look upon her. I am sorry for what I have down. I am sorry for the trouble that I have made. The silent broken dream of a kid who has never been laid. We make our claim at immortality and we chomp and fade away. Living in the unusual places, playing in the spiteful day. Settle us in. Settle us down. I am a fancy puff, I am a water clown. Standing in the zone of the pool. Standing in the zone of day. I go feather walking through the unnerving tendency to stunt and fade away. We need you here close to us. We need your hero call. We need the feathers of our father’s chorus. We need the phony false alarm. In the night. Our middle of the night. In the moon, our middle of the moon. In the shit show. The middle of our shit show. In the cancer, the middle of our cancer. Getting used to accepting things you cannot control. Getting use to controlling the things that you can control. A light touch. A deft engagement. We weave a false narrative. We beat our precious drum. I am a kingdom believer. I am a broken scrum. In the middle of the day we play at being a piece of shit. In the morning we play at being a piece of shit. Trying to filibuster the fuck out of Dodge, the wretched worthlessness of the new street revival and the broken day trip to the hurtful chorus fear mongering that predated the streets of your charms. I am not alive in this room. I am not alive in this room. The street shuttering and hearing. The near broken chorus of the friction that you were talking about. The heat on my skin. The fist in my mouth. I can’t call the chorus out. I can’t shift the spit. I can’t split the decision. My mind is at loose ends.

July has historically been a bit fucked for me. Two years ago getting high with sky and playing basketball sometime around that day. Trying to connect with Carl. Trying to bust through to the other side of elements that I have found less than useful. We could have programmed our memory lane. We could have shifted our wealth off shore. We could have stuck to the money men and slipped out the back door. This morning I am lonely for you. I should have never left you there. This morning I am lonely for you. I never should have left you there. There is content in this morning. There is an exit and a start. There are stats and there are heroes, robust objects emerging from the dark. I plead my case and then retreat, the barrister children haunt me in the park.

Radical empathy. An empathy for my characters. An empathic reception of my better intentions.

15 pushups on a hot July day. My mind starts shooting symmetrical patterns towards my third eye. My whatever chakra. I think about my father and his miles and miles and miles of running. Push. Maintain. Push. Maintain.

We have played at making progress. We have played at maintaining. We have found humility in our own wretchedness. We have found fortune close to the sun. We have found enemies in the street. We have found friends in the castle. Wallowing in our own shallowness we have gone daily into battle. I make my plans and sleep. I make my beats and weep. Red sweater moving from ideas about life and Christ and sanity. Sleep remembrances of other times.

Shitting all over this process and just feeling down with it. Shitting all of this process and just feeling fed up with it. I have an agenda that moves me to despair. I have an action eyed vision for the priest. I count up all my lost ways. People with agendas playing in the devil rays. I am damned if I do. I am damned if I don’t.

But what I wanted to say was this:

Woodshadows floated silently by through the morning peace from the stairhead seaward where he gazed. Inshore and farther out the mirror of water whitened, spurned by lightshod hurrying feet. White breast of the dim sea. The twining stresses, two by two. A hand plucking the harpstrings merging their twining chords, Wavewhite wedded words shimmering on the dim tide.

And now I too have the bagel belly of a beast for all seasons. The sanguine fiction of losing myself to the farther out wind.

I ran up on the shore and could not look myself in the eye. I ran up on the shore and could not make myself reply.

**06/13/2016**

My plan for the day balloons and I feel a bit overwhelmed. I see my output and I am underwhelmed. I work and I try to get things done and I try and I fail. And when I have alcohol in my blood I feel happy and hopeful, but I have a difficult time balancing out all my different desires.

I haven’t been stretching and I feel tense and turned in on myself. The ideal is to be loose and centered and open to receive the universe with a solid base. Expect that everyone wants to hit me. Expect that everyone wants to attack me, smack me, sack me.

I shall forever struggle for that is life and that is the rhythm of life. To live and to struggle and to pitch back and forth against the weather of life. Oh, the storms, oh the soft summer days when you couldn’t quite look up.

And if I am writing and if I am living in language and if I am present for my wife , for my daughter, and if I am writing letters to be present to my friends whom I no longer am close to. Then good. Then life. Then solid. Then you are living your life are you not? Not apologizing for that which you cannot control. What about the idea of writing a short story for yourself. Writing something big and bloated and ambitions and then cutting the crap out of it for fun. Cutting the crap out of it because that is part of how you live in language. And you don’t have to worry about wasting money because you have

**3/06/2019**

Trying to find my creative process. My creative process that balances out all of my interests and my ability to provide for my family. This is not a fearful quest- this is glorious. You are a modern warrior. A knight. A ninja. A worker. A bastion of culture and progress. You see the truth. You have glimpsed the truth and you are trying to hold it in your mind. He had glimpsed the truth and now he is just trying to hold it in his mind.

Why can’t I do this sober? I haven’t tried? My level of non-sobriety is not much of a problem. Using alcohol and marijuana less would be good for my health and good for my savings. Put sleep first over all of that and you will see results. It seems like Brian’s sleep is way out of control for him. Let that be an example to you young man. Stay in some semblance of control of your sleep.

At 40 I was finally able to clarify my obsessions and accept them and push toward them in a more balanced way. We all have to live within ourselves and that is fine. Life is about accepting gifts, but it is also about accepting limitations. Accepting cause and effect. Accepting the fact that we have limited energy and limited emotional wherewithal. Accepting that we need the sun and we need rest. We need our daily bread and we need the love of other people around us. We are all in a plot of land. More herbal than we would like to admit- with our have roots will travel devil can care attitude. I am not afraid of this Geek Sublime. I am not afraid of wasting my life. I have wasted half of it, I am almost there. Almost to the finish line. We all die. What a gift to live and die. What bliss this existence can obtain by being temporal. By being fleeting. The radiating moment. That moment may never return. We are the stories we tell. We are the stories we live. We are traveling through a deep ocean breathing and believing that we should believe what we believe. I am not afraid of the night. I am not afraid of the night. I am running my way into the night. I am running my way into the night. We are not alone in the twilight of our night.

**03/09/2019**

Drugs and Alcohol are too mental...They neglect the body. My body gets neglected when I am all heady with drugs and alcohol and I feel that is unavoidable. You need to strike a vigilant balance. I don’t want to give up drinking alcohol and I don’t want to give up smoking pot, but my number one priority is my responsibility to my family. I need to be available to them. And I need to best deploy my energy to be there for them/enjoy them/love on them, earn my living, and launch my career.

The LifeXL is an approximation of where I am at… focus you in on what your focus is on… reign in your habits- getting up, going to sleep, exercise, substance consumption, project focus.

**3/15/2019**

The trashy theater. The art school inchoate arc. The attempt. The reach. The underwear reading. The risk. The telling. The attempting to reach out beyond. Be brave. Push boundaries. Attempt to reach beyond.

Our theater attempts in college. Memorizing lines. Smoking on the stage. Markijuana memory and nerves. Met my wife back stage. Listening to Moby play in ear buds. An excuse to get closer. An intimation of all our future intimacies. Closeness. Tupac Shakur mural. Moby smapled, ambient masterpieces. Slow build, flow build. That guy Phil offended because a lot of his songs are structed the same way. The simplicity of the songs undercut their effectiveness for him. I am driving at night and trying to zone out and find a flow. What is it with humans? Why are we so prone to fall into life denying hair-splitting analytic moods while at the same time being very capable of full-brain numbed devotion to structures are cobbled together mostly of inchoate notions and sound bites. A roving chain of slogans and aired grievances. A roiling howl of patriotic bawling to keep the post-millennial tensions at bay.

And the going to *Remember the Alamo* on 3/15/2019 to see Nancy perform before Sky and Nancy got divorced. And feeling like it was pretty sad. And did I drink two beers as I was walking there? Felt pretty good by the time that I got there and then afterwards we had pizza and beer and it was all very nice. But their marriage was dying at this point. This was the ides of March. Later

**06/13/2016**

Drinking and marijuana alienate me from myself. They too often become poppy flowers and lay me low with the lotus eaters. The best of times with them are when they have focused me in on creative processes. And they have done that. They have shut out the other voices and responsibilities allowing me to fall deeper into a momentary whim- how pure and childlike that is. How pure and without guile such a moment is. A moment of pure and childlike creation.

But I fail when I realize that my larger being is tied into the multiplicity of responsibilities and life structure. The things I need to do to sustain life. Yes, yes, live in the moment. Live in the moment-- embrace it. Live in the moment-- breath it in. Savor it. Savor each and every pain and plan and complication. Embrace each passing day. Wake early and do the things that dig into your soul and slow time

**07/09/2021**

If I can do all of this—the writing and programming and guitar strumming and stretching and parenting and partnering without edging off with pot and beer so consistently I will truly be set.

And maybe that isn’t true, but if it is then that is a good story—it’s a comedy. And if it is not, then that’s a good story, it’s a tragedy. The only true failure is the non-executed. The non-tried. That failed mindset of the never was.

This said after being back the surreptitious alley beers and the day smoking before the girls get up and then again while the girls go out, with showers and shirt changes and tooth brushes and visine rituals to keep the stony aroma form baking itself too deeply in. A smoke screen for his smoke screen.

This circling, cricling routine. Wandering out and around the material in ever narrowing? Ever widening arcs?

He felt isolated. It would be good to talk though what he was doing. Though, no it really wouldn’t. Or it would, but it could be done without context. Like Erik. He wanted to write to Erik and he had been, but how to bring it back and make it short, digestible. Comprehensible. Nourishing? Same thing with letter to Stephen.

**6/8/2016**

Space and time bind me in space.

No more drugs, he says,

The openness there in crushed me lazily in my bed.

Am I depressed? Merely a tired parent? A middle-aged man?

Aging, struggling to cope with my coping habits.

Placate yourself and shut up, sugar down your gullet, keep smiling,

Just don’t show your teeth, some people find that offensive.