Dear Matt,

Have been meaning to write. *They* say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. *They* say a lot of things though and in no particular order, or with any particularly clear ranking of importance and/or urgency. *They* send many, many messages. *They* are profligate message senders really. A nuclear meltdown of messages, some cast, some let slip, some blasted from cannons, megaphones. Others muttered. Many merely inferred, made apparent in the confetti constellations of needs and wants, insecurities and aggressions. Kindnesses asked for or not. Messages all just spilling out—the naturalness and abundance of this message sending is impressive, impressing. IN/OUT. OUT/IN. Though at times, I must admit, I am sometimes overcome.

Glad to be writing. Have written much since September. Something of a process having coalesced, though the whole factorial systems is more fox hunt than General Motors. And the foxes are truffles spored over night from mythical seeds I sneezed up decades ago— then growing, growing, growing all these years—winding, searching tendrils—the ever budding green of being…*Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past. If all time is eternally present. All time is unredeemable. What might have been is an abstraction. Remaining a perpetual possibility. Only in a world of speculation. What might have been and what has been. Point to one end, which is always present. Footfalls echo in the memory. Down the passage which we did not take. Towards the door we never opened. Into the rose-garden. My words echo. Thus, in your mind. But to what purpose. Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves. I do not know. Other echoes. Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?*

This past fall River imagery started coming at me fast and furious. I kept starting books that began with some kind of river setting—“Yes, Siddartha,” he said. “Is this what you mean? That the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean, and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past, nor the shadow of the future?” “That is it,” said Siddhartha, “…Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence.” It was a time of gifts. My younger brother sent me a book by Patrick Leigh Fermor featuring a very Tarot card inspired cover with a road or a river snaking back to a horizon and disappearing between two rises. The book which details the author’s 1930s walking trip from Holland on his was to Istanbul via the course of the Danube River. The writing is rich—the darkest of chocolates, all narrative push is completely surrendered to the rendering of details. A cacophony of details. The language supplants the experience, the linguistic delight of the language somehow transcends the careful verisimilitude of the depiction. *Of Rivers and Religion*… the river in the Condor Heroes book. The river in the Blood Meridian. Ice cold Coke at a crossroads country store. I began writing. I began a process. My process does not penalize spontaneity and free association; in fact it rewards and amplifies it; makes sense of it; abstractions arise out of order not chaos. My process decided that writing is yoga and that yoga supports tech and that tech supports yoga and that yoga is writing and therefore tech also supports writing. I am quite happy with this arrangement, conception. Perhaps this is the peace that patheth understanding. Perhaps not. Either way I think I ought to let it ride.

It’s a very subtle thing and not something I have any plans to lash my vocation to, but I have this increased openness to rhythm and beat. It’s strange to say but I feel like the depth of my appreciation for music has swelled this year immensely. It is fantastic that you are playing with a different intention. A new angle. That grind. That resistance. That atmospheric heat before the vacuum of space. My playing has changed subtlety of late. I hope the change comes through. It’s a quality. A willingness to explore. AN ability to explore. AN ability to absorb the long notes. Seeking out rhythm before melody. Seeking out vibration before note or key. Playing the guitar hugged up against me just so I can feel its big wooden body vibrate against my heart chakra. I’ve had this ideal for a long time for guitar playing that feels natural, fun, that feels like playing, that feels like something physical and something mental. That perfect balance between the thought and the physical act and then combining some element of beauty with it. It is so obvious to me now why music is so transcendent.

John Fahey. Just the poetry of his song titles and his beatnik existence. Three failed marriage hooking up the iron horse to the back of the carriages. Some frequency running through me. Finally really feeling John Fahey. American Primitive guitar has totally captured my imaginiaton and catapulted me into a new phase of guitar playing, I am not saying my playing is so spectacular, but I am having fun with it. The pisirt, the ides, the repetitive changes. Its like Joh Fahey meets Radiohead, or I am finally trying to craft some kin do fbasic sound. Like John Fahey crossed with Radiohead…Mary Oliver’s *American Primitive*. John Fahey Christmas songs moving my soul in February the day after I turned 42- the answer to everything as after making my way from the Keweenaw to Seminole swamps on Highway 41 t all along LSD through Nashville,Tennessee, dreaming of the Natchez Trail somewhere out near Timberlake

American culture is trying to build something that is greater than the sum of our parts. Sacred music. Secular music. Poetry. Silence. Everything all at once in a cacophony of completeness. And then pulled back and nothingness then one pure strain, one vibrating tendril of sound reaching out through the intricate web of aural labyrinths of what our ears and minds and livers already know without even a second consideration, but we could spend our whole lives trying to wrap our minds around and that is why this existence is madness and that is why this existence is genius. We are just the species to wrestle with these absurdities.

Then what about PLACE? How about HOME? What if we start there?

Home, place, belonging… these things need to be constructed wherever they are. Wherever we are. Names mean very little until we imbue them with meaning. I was born in Mt. Pleasant and mostly grew up in Gladstone which neighboring townspeople nicknamed “Happy Rock”. My third and fourth grade teacher was a man named Mr. Rose. There was no Mount in Mt. Pleasant. Gladstone was not particularly rocky or with any logical connection to the former British Prime Minister and Mr. Rose was a bear of a man and not very flower like at all.

These names as you get closer to them as you live in them the linguistic import of the words begins to meld with the experiential connotations you have with the place. We make our stab at circumscribing reality, getting a handle on it, by reconciling these differences in impressions, implied meanings, and actually hard, lived reality and experience.

Here: NORTH CENTER. I will admit my heart does not leap up at this very pragmatic and descriptive place name. It is a good place to live though. But it is indeed on the northside and is rather centrally located—bit of a drive towards the lake, bit of a drive towards the highway. Our world remains planted at the intersection Damen, Irving Park, and Lincoln, the one where the Sprint, At&T and T-Mobile shops all face off at the intersection in a Mexican stand-off until Sprint merged with T-Mobile and its store front went empty, and then in a power move T-Mobile plopped its billboard on top of At&t’s building offering an early and starting far off glimpse of the 6 point rivaly to the slow-moving rush hour processing moving southeast to northwest up Lincoln Avenue. The billboard partially obscures the western view from our back porch. Its wash of hot pink looms large in all of the picturesque vistas that play out on the canvas of the big sky we have back there. Clouds- morning or evening. Colors from the east or the west. Flat Chicago, land yawning to the west. Crows in late autumn western suburbs suddenly farmland environs. Trees are mostly the highest things to the west except for the billboard and the spire of St. Ben’s that often looks very dramatic and regal either catching the eastern rays of the rising sun on its façade or backdropped by the oozing undulating color of the collapsing afternoon. *Dandelions split and strob the golden light / at the gold hour, while the red brick wall / Becomes an amber ember respirating in the wind.*

Sirens blare, tired sirens receding, growing sleepier, whinier, more pitched, shrill, distant and disappearing. Then deeper, gruffer, even more impatient firetruck horns. An exhalation with some heft behind it— announcing throttling missile of steel and gasoline and H20, barreling the fuck right through! An airplane’s doppler descent unfolds out over head. I distinctly feel that am not this world’s center. I occupy it this world, but it certainly does not revolve around me. The anonymity of the city has initiated me into this liberating knowing.

We keep it cozy in our third story walk up tree house on the lovely tree-lined Cuyler, two and a half blocks from the Irving Brownline stop, or just as close, not one, but two microbreweries. Our neighborhood encourages walking, rewards it. Trader Joes is just a jaunt down Lincoln. Jewel is up equidistant the other way. There’s a Mariano’s due north a mile at Lawrence. Took a Divvy there on Mother’s Day morning for some flowers and breakfast items, it was all very lovely even riding in the rain.

A couple of springs ago I went to therapy a couple of times. Talked about the time Mr. Rose duct taped my mouth and my fremeny Jeremy’s mouths in 4th grade. Still not okay Mr. Rose. Afterwards I walked back across the parking lot, ascended the three flights up to my empty apartment, got a roast slow cooking in the crockpot, ate half of a pot brownie and rode a Divvy over to Andersonville to get my haircut. Afterward the chatty cut I crossed the street and had a frothy Belgian draft at the Hoplear. Then I biked home and took mushrooms and proceeded to spend the entire trip drifting room to room in my apartment cleaning and settling. HOME presented itself early on as the theme of the journey and at any given time that I lost my way, or suddenly started to anxious—what should I be doing now!?!—I simply picked up where I left off picking up and straightening and organizing the apartment. By the time I was worn out and ready for sleep, the apartment was in great shape. The next day I found out that our apartment was going to be sold and that we might have to move. The timing of this was a shock, but it also threw into really sharp relief what a tragedy this would be, but also vis a vis what a wonderful situation we currently had!

One of my absolute favorite reads this year has been Nick Cave (of the Bad Seed’s) periodic newsletter—*The Red Hand Files.* I do really enjoy his music, but the man himself, as projected through this blog, I find even more inspiring, encrouaging, nourishing. He has turned a simple question and answer blog into something really beautiful. The connection I feel to him and his ideas through this email blast consistently catches me off guard. It’s perhaps his greatest work. His writing and generously shared and articulate thoughts on writing and art have been a huge influence on me and a completely unexpected boon. Something of his metaphorical devoutness, his secular reverence for the power of Christian imagery as fount of expression and longing and psychological, intellectual and spiritual expression, inspired me, despite having long drifted away from mainstream Christian or religion in general to write an old-time spiritual sort of ditty.

*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 wandered, I have played,*

*I have whiled away my days,*

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

Esme really liked it and since then we have sporadically sung or chanted it together with or without guitar accompanied.

Then a few weeks later after dialoging with a Christian, my mother, and having her go off on some crazed explanation of hell as being the ultimate result of cancel culture—effectively replacing millenia of theology for the buzziest of right wing alarmist catchalls. I found this incredibly depressing. How could my mother be so shitty at ordering her truths?

Then I wrote this:

*Having listened to your twice-told tales,*

*Hear tell three times of mine.*

*Let’s anoint 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,*

*Run round by a bloody moat.*

*But fear not, we’ll stay in touch,*

*Keep watch for stiff dispatches from my solitary cell,*

*As I while away eternity in my beloved hell.*

I start dreaming up names for home. Some future home. Perhaps something more exotic and grand than my current North Center home. Something of my own. Something to move past the Mt. Pleasant and the Happy Rock. What name could so perfectly capture that name of my home. I try a few names before I quickly realize that you can’t just conjure up a name for your home like it’s a pet or something. Real place names are backed up by places and histories. Significance. Natural history. Fate. I decide to whip up a little computer program to see if perhaps through technology I can chase this inchoate name of home. I give feed the program a few PlaceNameForms and then a bunch of raw material—woodland creatures, historical figures, topographical features. I then as it for 100 names of home. The computer does not hesitate at all before supplying me with 100 names for my home.

*Bittersweet Canyon*

*Modern Creek*

*Bittersweet Glade*

*The Washington Cliffs*

*Porcupine Swamp*

*The Grottos of Modern Pond*

*Tubman Brook*

*Lincoln Pasture*

*Viper Meadow*

*The Tubman Dells*

*The Flats of Havalina Cliffs*

*The Heights of Three Crossing*

*The Shoals of Deer Highland*

*The Grottos of Progressive Hollow*

*The Washington Shores*

*Snowy Shallows*

*Raven Grasslands*

*Shoshone Shallows*

*Rockefeller Inlet*

*Wolf Highland*

*Lincoln Bluff*

*The Hollows of Ermine Lake*

*The Roosevelt Grasslands*

*Sanctuary Rock*

*Lux Hill*

*Opossom Hilltop*

*The Washington Cliffs*

*The Falls of Modern Ridge*

*The Cliffs of Ermine Sands*

*Vole Rock*

*Turkey Stream*

*The Shoals of Snowy Savannah*

*The Tubman Straights*

*Wolf Hill*

*Lincoln Rock*

*Turkey Ridge*

*The Hemingway Glens*

*Bittersweet Pasture*

*The Grasslands of Deer Highland*

*The Pritzker Cliffs*

*Modern Pasture*

*Raven Grasslands*

*Grand Swamp*

*Stoat Cove*

*Pritzker Highlands*

*The Falls of Ferret Shallows*

*Wolf Prairie*

*Newt Flats*

*Deer Dells*

*The Hemingway Flats*

*The Grasslands of Freedom Prairie*

*Beaver Narrows*

*Lux Island*

*The Wittman Hills*

*Wolf Mesa*

*The Shoshone Shoals*

*The Grottos of Sparrow Canyon*

*Wittman Landing*

*The Tubman Flats*

*Ferret Heights*

*Coyote Grottos*

*Lincoln Field*

*The Island of Sanctuary River*

*Freedom Hilltop*

*The Shoshone Grottos*

*The Hemingway Hills*

*Vole Hills*

*Progressive Cliffs*

*Shoshone Bluff*

*The Chapman Glens*

*Liberty Stream*

*Viper Bluff*

*Washington Haven*

*Progressive Hill*

*Eagle Savannah*

*Eagle Haven*

*The Shallows of Stoat Inlet*

*The Hollows of Three Glen*

*Trout Cliffs*

*Coyote Glens*

*The Hills of Sanctuary Island*

*The Straights of Modern Hollow*

*Sanctuary Haven*

*Havalina Shoals*

*Eagle Sounds*

*The Cliffs of Bobcat Crossing*

*The Pritzker Shallows*

*Wittman Creek*

Or how about this: Inside this envelope is a piece of paper-- stationary. Written on the paper are the words: *here is an envelope*. There is not an envelope on the paper, but the words are there. They state clearly: *here is an envelope*. Within this envelope is a room— you flatten yourself out and join the text inside, inside the envelope, inside the room.

I am drunk in southern China on the border with Vietnam balling my eyes out as members of the waitstaff dressed in traditional garb serenade us. I remember really hating our hosts at this point and feeling dumb for having gotten so drunk and feeling physically awful because I was somehow no drunk and hungover at the same time, and these workers were singeing this transcendentally gorgeous folk tune that just unlocked some deep emotional flood gate. Betsy helped me out of there and we went back to our room for a little bit while I tried to get myself the fuck together. At last I went back to the table and some cool guy in the wings kept me in a steady supply of cigarettes which I held before me like a joss of incense and the ash burnt down and fell in my lap throughout the rest of the forever long meal.

Over the past 36 hours we had flown from Beijing to southern China. Had our flight delayed. Slept for a few hours in a random layover hotel room. Hustled on to another plane to a very rural and remote part of the country along the border of Vietnam where there had been a small, but hot war between the two countries in 1979 the year I was born. In January 1979 when Deng Xiaoping visited Jimmy Carter in Washington he mentioned (speaking of Vietnam)-- "The little child is getting naughty, it's time he got spanked." ( 小朋友不听话，该打打屁股了). The conflict flashed home two weeks after I was born and raged for a couple of weeks. Tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians were killed. In the aftermath, once the incurring Chinese forces retreated 20,000 plus members of the Vietnamese Communist party were expelled for having Chinese ethnicity or being suspected of having Chinese sympathies. The old communist Domino Theory which seemingly unpinned the whole cold-war outlook gets pretty shredded when faced with the reality and nuances of reality. Ideology isn’t everything, even for ideologues apparently.

How had I gotten so drunk… oh, that’s right… after much advertising that we would be “drinking” with the headmaster at lunch, we then in fact drank with the headmaster at lunch, which entailed a lot of communal toasts and whatnot, but with me as the drinking guest having to repeatedly drink one on one cheers with all the gathered hosts- the teachers, drivers, adminstrators. This was a terrible idea because we were drinking Baijiu and not beer and at some point in my radiating tipsiness I just sort of said whatever and gave myself over to the punishing hospitality of hosts.

The Chinese communist party. Drinking with the headmaster. Who couldn’t speak English because he had majored in physics. Like Einstein who was a genius. Yes, a genius! The Headmaster is a Genius. An English Genius! If he had just a couple of months, maybe even weeks to study, if he had the time, if his tiem were not so pressed upon, important and in demand, he would be able to learn English incredibly quickly! Remarkably quick! Yes! He is an English genius.

A some point in this meal we were raising toasts to Hujin Tao and to Barak Obama for having won the election. After much communal enthusiasm for our leaders. Someone asked betsy and I who we voted for, we were caught a little off guard, as you would assume that by our enthusiastic cheersing you could get some kind of read on our political loyalties. This apparently didn’t translate.

“Who did you vote for?”

“Uh… Obama.”

“Really!?!”

“Uh-huh.”

In the morning for breakfast we had a bowl of nourishing soup. It was delicious despite looking exactly like the weedy, reedy, swamp marsh that surrounded us.

Later at lunch we ate with our hosts again and had several dishes including what was basically just a huge plate of hash browns. They tasted incredible with the little glasses of Coca-cola that I was shooting. The only issue was getting parts of the hash brown off of the communal serving dish and on to my own plate was a bit of a trick- the potatoes where shredded and greasily fried together if by a vegetable oil spraying arch welder. In fact, no one else at the table had even attempted a sortie into the morass.

I persisted though in pursuit of sobriety bridging deliciousness. My low-key cajoling of the potatoes with my single chopstick fulcrum prompted one of our hosts that had consistently been establishing himself as an arrogant asshole over the last 36 hours, offered in the most patronizing tone that we could arrange a knife and a fork for me for me next time if the chopsticks were too much of a challenge. He says this in such a faux winning WASPY kind of patronizing country club way that it is almost unnerving. Is this a micro-aggression or more aggressive fawning Chinese hospitality. Innocently annoying, or aggressively so. A similar single-cross as when my British brother-in-law greets me first thing in the morning with “Are you all right?” Which just kind of makes me feel mad for some reason, annoyed that he seems to be implying that I am not all right, like I don’t look all right or I am concerned about something or something, forcing me in my morning stupor to reflexively reflect on if I am in fact all right and if or if not so what about my mien is sending the message that I might not be all right. Then I realize its just his standard morning greeting. Which I try to accept, but it still sort of weirds me out. I check in betsy and it weirds her out as well. I appreciate the extra objectivity triangulation she consistently offers as a life partner. She too thought the WASPY Party guy was an asshole too.

***House Parties***

*“The two parties which divide the state, the party of Conservatism and that of Innovation, are very old, and have disputed the possession of the world ever since it was made. This quarrel is the subject of civil history. The conservative party established the reverend hierarchies and monarchies of the most ancient world. The battle of patrician and plebeian, of parent state and colony, of old usage and accommodation to new facts, of the rich and the poor, reappears in all countries and times. The war rages not only in battle-fields, in national councils, and ecclesiastical synods, but agitates every man's bosom with opposing advantages every hour. On rolls the old world meantime, and now one, now the other gets the day, and still the fight renews itself as if for the first time, under new names and hot personalities.”*

* Ralph Waldo Emerson (December 9, 1841)

**A Few Definitions from *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable***

**Trump**. The word in such phrases as a *trumped up affair*, *trumpery*, etc., is the same word as *trumpet*; from Fr. *trompe*, a trumpet, whence *tromper* which, originally meaning “to play on a trumpet,” came to mean to beguile, deceive, impose upon.

**The last trump*.*** The final end of all things earthly; the Day of Judgement. *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. – 1 Cor. Xv, 51,52.*

**To play one’s last trump.** To be reduced to one’s last expedient: a phrase from cardplaying.

**Trumpet.** *See* Trump *above*.

**To blow one’s own trumpet**. To publish one’s own praises, good deeds, etc. The allusion is to heralds, who used to announce with a flourish of trumpets the knights who entered a list. Similarly, *your trumpeter* *is dead* means that you are obliged to sound your own praised because no one will do it for you.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

***A Nutcracker***

A nutcracker came to town,

in a burlap cloak and a foil crown—

gilded-spanner in his well-clung grip:

trumpets to blare,

pigeons to seed,

juris doctors to dispatch

to the queen: 4-2C.

And she way out on her balcony—

sniffling and swaying

a babe’s crib-cage,

bellowing below

to the hounds of late day,

who lull and lick thick grasses

grown over graves

dug deep down with the peanuts

in the blood-red clay.

While an eye in a mien

regards all with calm—

a Georgia peach in each palm,

a Georgia peach in each palm.

***Salad Dressing***

Was awoken

by a snarling visage—

would be remiss

not to admit

that I don’t miss him.

But if you do

just happen to

run into

you know who…

Take a kiss for me,

or more explicitly—

my ass.

In fact,

don’t ask—

just grab hold of his genitals.

Then! Dive right in all lecherously fumbling.

Shove your old Gene Simmons

directly down his gullet!

Savor the moment in full,

then blissfully, drooly let go.

Thank him for his service,

his oh-so-precious time,

for whipping up a miracle—

salad dressing from ancestral wine.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Words and Names**

Your line when last we texted about *surfing the silver linings* this yearwas a good one and one that I have come back to a bunch of times both in conversation and just mulling things over in my head. It is a much nicer phrase than, the albeit also very funny-- “M*erry Crisis and Happy New Fear*”.

I hope you have continued to relish your Suburban sojourn. Just like there is nothing necessarily great about a city there is also nothing necessarily awful about a suburb, though at times it feels like we approach the topic with these presuppositions. I suppose in the suburbs were there are many fewer overlapping “villages” or cultures you just have to put some extra effort in to pushing out of your bubble, it is easier to insulate in the suburbs, sterilize, make ever more convenience and automatic. Contingent city processes thwart many of these convenient and automatic avenues. That said, the city remains neither great nor awful as does the suburbs I’m sure. Elemental these days. Don’t really need the city with the trimmings. Just need a cozy place to live. And some relaxed streets to walk and my family around me.

Helena Rune and Esme Ione and betsy jayne. These have been my silver linings. All of the odd, unpredicted moments together. Wakeups, bedtimes. The tortuous muddle of work and home time. Some sort of scorching baptism by fire to cauterize my twitching sensitive heart. Having to ignore your child to get to work is a sort of wound. One that physical separation does much to abstract. One that physical proximity and inadequate doors exacerbates, irriates, mocks, iterates over incessantly making sure the managing of this wound becomes an inextricably part of the working process. I have at times been totally cool with all of this. At other times I have felt like John Rambo trying to cauterize my nasty side wound with a flamethrower.

Helena is often “Belle Belle” (Helena BaBellena). Esme is often “Ya” or “Yeah” (Helena’s name for her since Helena could speak). betsy is bets or Mom or Mommy. All names that give me a sense of home even when I hear them while working.

My younger sister has 6 girls. Each girl’s name contains exactly three syllables. They are very pretty girls and they have lovely if slightly extravagant names. The girls are *Gianna*, *Mariel*, *Adelaide*, *Madeline*, *Genevieve*, and *Emmaline*. While nicknames are inevitable, at home there is still a fair amount of three-syllable addressing that goes on. In the heat of the moment it is not uncommon for a syllable or two of one name to slip into the syllables of another name, mixing and melding the names together into a sisterly slush of feminine eponymous extravagance. Such as:

Madmalaide, Mareline, Genivieve, Emeel, Emilīne, Madelaide, Genanna, Gimael, Genmael, Genanlīne, Gievieve, Madelīne, Genina, Giivieve, Adelīne, Emanlīne, Gianel, Emmael, Genanline, Adivieve, Adeel, Maranna, Adina, Gimavieve, Geniel, Giiel, Genmalaide, Genelīne, Adanline, Madmana, Genanlaide, Marina, Madmael, Emmana, Marmalīne, Marena, Maranel, Marilīne, Adanel, Giina, Madanlīne, Adena, Gieline, Madmavieve, Madeline, Madanna, Marmalaide, Madivieve, Gianlaide, Maranlaide, Maranlīne, Emanline, Marmana, Emiel, Madanel, Adanvieve, Marmael, Gimalīne, Admavieve, Emiline, Gieel, Admael, Genilīne, Mareel, Emanel, Emmalaide, Genmalīne, Genanvieve, Genanel, Marmaline, Genmaline, Emmalīne, Giilīne, Geneline, Adanna, Madena, Emanvieve, Marevieve, Adiel, Marelaide, Genmana, Admana, Emanlaide, Madeel, Adilaide, Marilaide, Emivieve, Madanlaide, Madiel, Emelaide, Madmaline, Gielaide, Genena, Emevieve, Madilaide, Emena, Emelīne, Admalīne, Giilaide, Marmavieve, Madiline, Gimana, Gianlīne, Marivieve, Gianvieve, Emilaide, Giiline, Geniline, Giena, Emmavieve, Madina, Maranvieve, Madanvieve, Genmavieve, Emeline, Genelaide, Adevieve, Admalaide, Geneel, Adiline, Madevieve, Adilīne, Gianline, Maranline, Genilaide, Gimalaide, Marelīne, Mariline, Emina, Adanlaide, Madmalīne, Admaline, Gimaline, Gielīne, Madanline, Madilīne, Emanna

**Children / 小朋友 (xiǎo péngyóu）**

Today has been a gorgeous blue sky and billowy, pillow cloud kind of day, Helena— now 2 and a robust towheaded brute— and I are out in the yard and she is ambling over inquisitively toward our small garden plot, bee-lining, in fact, straight at a recently planted maroon and forest-green shock of leaf-blades.

“Do NOT pick my Chard!” I preemptively scold, nearly adding “or I will spank your bottom,” though I do not ultimately add that last part because I know how deadly serious I am, and I sense how deeply uncomfortable it would feel to threaten a child with violence over a salad.

Little backstory, recently she has been insisting on picking the buds and leaves off all of our botanicals almost as fast as we plant them. I, being somewhat more experienced with these kinds of things, find this approach to gardening messy and self-defeating.

We had a similar difference of opinion just the other day about whether or not it was appropriate to re-pot a goodly amount of loamy topsoil into my tantalizingly sweating mason jar of chilled water. Years ago, before I had kids, I was once at a brunch get-together where I observed one of my friends, who was already the father of three, being a little short with one of his girls over some issue with a cup of orange juice or something. At the time I remember feeling kind of surprised at how impatient or even almost unkindly you were addressing your angelic little Tomte. Maybe, he’s having a particularly stressful day I had thought at the time. Now I realize he definitely was having at least a partially stressful day because, you know, he had children and he was likely not being mean to his child at all, but was, in fact, exerting incredible, if not saintlike-level patience, artfully teasing out and expanding just a bit more your reservoir of that most precious of parental commodities, that greedily gobbled up resource that well before this cup of juice or even this very morning had been pulled and stretched as thin as a gossamer shroud though still somehow holding— together and true through some miraculous act of superhuman effort. Love?

I also now realize that our children are in essence sociopaths that we have been charged with by fate to reform as penance for our own past, if not present, sociopathic behavior. Which is certainly not to say don’t have children, but just, you know, brace yourself… for love.

All the best,

Excess:

***I was dying on the river***

We are deer in a wood seeking out the good buds and the safe passages to sustenance and sex. And we shall perhaps die one particularly cold winter’s day or from some particularly aggressive virus, pulling our four poster beds down into the earth behind us as we fold into the seasons, communing with the rock, the river, and on…

Context? Context? Where’d we put that context…Will the receiver be nonplussed at the arrival of an unsolicited text? More junk mail? Blindingly subjective— shifting, bare-chested, bellowing; an ego, a persona, a voice, belly-laughing down the old fallacy that a fixed perspective could ever constitute even close to anything approaching an honest totality.

My mouth gone rouge from rooting my snoot all through the dusty maroon of the floor. Digging the details of my own disintegration. Overcome by gestalt. Messages, images, ever on. Syncopated hand claps, forever future, perpetually past.