Chicago, Illinois February 5th,2020

Dear Patricia,

Today was a good day. Home on a Wednesday. Tapping into my meager two weeks of vacation for a couple of days home with the girls and a trip up north. Today was a good day, despite a ragged initial wake-up, my mind and body demanded more oblivion. Helena, who sleeps in a small white crib wedged into the corner of our 20th century proportioned rectangular room awoke at 1:40 a.m. with a gleeful howl. She was standing in her white crib, howling, truly gleefully. Excited to be awake. Not an iota of protest, just wild, growly joy. And so I scooped her up, cuddly and cozy in her sleep sack, half-awake myself, wondering at her wild joy. The next two and half hours passed in a grey montage of pacing and bottle warming and aborted attempts to place her back into her crib Indiana Jones style- softly, softly, steady, just so, but no, she wakes and protests, all her wild glee gone out. At last, at last, betsy and her marvelous breasts calm the beast and then sleep and then morning too soon.

And, but, yet, still it was a good day. I truly love being home: brewing coffee, putting toys away, cleaning, organizing, reading, writing, coding, whatever. We have a nice home. Third floor brick walk-up built a hundred years ago and more. Day-time light pours in through windows on four sides. The rooms are small and the closest are tiny, but we two porches and all in all it is the treehouse I have always wished for. Out our front window we track the seasons by our four-season tree- naked, bony limbs; buds and sprouting leaves; obscuring, life-full canopy; radiant orange and brown farewell and on and on. Our street is quiet and there are two brewers two blocks down and a train to downtown just past.

So I’ve been thinking about writing for a while. It’s generally a thing I do− thinking about writing and then not writing. Oh, doing, when there is so much to be done! Oh, doing when there is so much to be produce! Be productive! When the writing does happen, I relish it, even as it eviscerates me.

I remember a brief conversation with you at uncle Pete’s place on Big Manistique Lake years ago when we talked about writing. We talked about “morning pages”- did I know I about the concept then, or did your introduce the idea to me (this is how time turns flat and the order of ideas gets scrabbled and we are left with nothing to do except just to accept the narratives we find stuck in our minds, or we rewrite them. I shared something about my knack/handicap of being able to just stream-of-conscious write, spewing out thought, description, poetry, imagery, often ultimately mind-numbing psychobabble. You could tell I was lamenting, questioning the value of it, the worth of it, I may have said something about how it makes me question my own sanity sometimes, ‘cause I mean, what is it. It is commercial. It is often not even fun or instructive. Am I venting? Am I building something? Am I constructing? Am I building towards something? We here in this capitalist system of ours, must pay our own way, no? We must justify how we waste our time. Waste/use our days. and you had such a cool, calm, wise response: you said something like, “Yeah, but you can turn it off.” Something about the knowing way you said it was extremely reassuring and I have thought it has come back to me over the years as my various stabs at moving beyond the detris and shambling collection of words I’ve scrawled in notebooks and most recently tablets of yellow legal paper. What am I writing exactly…I have no idea. Everything is put down with the idea that it can be returned to. It can perhaps be crafted, massaged, built upon.

What is this inchoate desire to identify as a writer, an artist? I think it has something to do with my discarded faith. If religion is a mode of living, then when my church affiliation petered out, in my mind I, at least partially, inserted, or clung to more tightly this idea that writing, literature, creation, reflection (all prayer and meditation on some level) could fill my religious void.

I should emphasize that I am not thirsty for religion. I mostly just miss the singing and the praying and the readings. Not even any specific content, but just the act; the song, the silence, the cadence of weighted deity. I love writing. Way over think it. Anguish about not doing it when I’m not doing it, and doing it when I am doing it. Not a healthy relationship, but I am working on it.

At any rate- I hope you are well! Best, best in 20/20! Fireworks and so forth!

I’ve decided to take the pressure off the content of my epistles- in the end this is all just a reut ally elaborate penmenship exercise (this written by hand before I typed the damned thing because my handwriting sometimes triggers a wave of crippling anxiety in me. Looking at my handwriting makes me feel crazy… is it a kind of mirror. Writing opens up the crazy. Writing opens up a vein of emotion. But, yeah, a penmenship exercise. The fact of the matter also worth mentioning is that I am absolutely out of practice with this kind of communication, which is sad because once upon a time I wrote a good number of rambling confessional/inquisitive long-form missives. And now in the modern day, middle-aged, infront of a device all day, where’s the pen and paper time? Esme has been pretty inspiring in this regard. Her letter writing prowess is totally untamed! She has a correspondence going with everyone from a few of her cousins and grandparents, to classmates and teachers, and even her pediatrician and the woman who runs the bookmaking studio and stationary shop down the street.

At the moment I am supposed listening to supposedly randomn mix of various artists playing off my computer, but somehow, however unlikely, the last two tracks have both had Ringo Starr on lead vocals (“Goodnight” and Octopus’s Garden”).

I do hope you are traveling well these days (“Archie”by Alvvays follows the Ringos). This life, she’s certainly spinning round profoundly. It’s all been so organic, but still it’s a little unclear just exactly how we’ve moved through, traveling there to here.

Chicago beds down in white tonight. Rush hour snow fall made Friday night a little fraught. Will likely rain tomorrow and cement grey will once again be the palate of our mise-en-scene. ‘Tis the plight of us southerners- inconsistent winter. Freezing followed by melting followed by freezing once more. Winter without useable snow. Snow is but a transient scenic flourish.

Soon though, our family four will be deep into authenic, consistently (unrelenting winter). We’re heading up north! Our first visit to the U.P. in about a year and a half and Helena’s first trip up! Esme is super excited to visit Gladstone as she dearly loves her Mema and Papa. Helena, nearly one, is being pretty sotic about the whole thing, but she’s generally up for anything!

I hope this 20/20, this year o’ the Rat, this next turn around the sun, turns out to be a good one for you! I’m hopeful- despite the global epidemics, toxic politics, tragic helicopter crashes, general professional uncertainly, Hamlet like bullshit writing response etc. and so on…

All the best,

The land of opportunity.

Obvious never sent… I have been spending a lot of time alone recently living up to my Chinese name at long last… not really at long last though. When I think about it I have definitely gone through extended non-traditional schooling periods of self-study. I always try to sneak in a bit of writing during these times, but especially the last decade I have had the hounds of really fixing up a vocation snarling down my back. Pushing forty and not having pushing past forty into the anyomous years of ones early forties. There is a little mad beauty in all of this though. Is hell, it is a great time to have a mid-life crisis. It is literally the season of crisis. The Chinese know this now don’t you now. The Chinese work for crisis: 危机- is composoed of two characters: 危- danger, risk and 机- opportunity.

So here we are in the land of opportunity. It is truly a bizarre time to be alive, but inspiring as well. I think it speaks to the rambunctiousness of the moment. I can say that I am long-term hopeful and ultimately I am, but we are certainly bunkered down a bit right now. Somewhat by the dictates of the situation and the sucker punch of losing my day job.

But not I am writing and I am finding my way into some projects that previously working full time I jut did not quite have the wherewithal to see through to any sort of next step. Artisrty wise I have pumped out a lot of raw, journal sketches and false starts over the years, which I do not submit for pity, but kind of as a badge of honor. I have not given up. I have battled with strange expressive restraints for a very long time and I am battling them sting, but I am beginning to realize that the battling is part of the process. If there wasn’t any battle I don’t think the work would be quite as good. I don’t think the work would be as full and polished. Or as incomplete. I think a lot of times with my writing, a more polished and ultimately coherent and communicative draft often entails, above all, deletion and subtraction. Push it out, overstate it. Fucking Walt Witman the topic out there and look at it and make categories out of it and distill it and see it and feel the emotions and name them.

Croner

11/08/2020

So I’m feeling pretty good these days. Finding a flow, finding wherewithal to stay present and appreciative of the moment. I gave myself 40 days and 40 nights to go on an inner journey— and I journaled through during my experience on the other side of the gate that opened between the two full moons of last October. I stayed awake all night to watch the blue moon pass across the city sky, meditating and stretching and listening to music on my headphones as the girls slept. Helena woke up absurdly early for her, but it wasn’t a bit deal since I was already up— this being the 1st of November now, All Saints Day and such, and she oohed and aaahed in my arms as we watched the sun rise in the east and the moon set in the west, illuminated against the quickening blue sky. Today is the last day of my “healing” days. I have affored myself since the closing of the portal. Tomorrow I will get back to working on coding in my effort to self-train myself into the tech field. It’s promising as there does seem to be a lot owkr out there and the coiding itself works out a new part of my brain that I think I’ve neglected a bit these 7 seven years. My relatively manice work as a sales associate, didn’t leave a lot of time or s[apce for “long” , “systematic” thoughts. My physical reality has conmpletely change from a year ago. My physical, track meet existence has become one of still ness and sitting, stretching and meditating, no trains, I rarelydrive. It has really turned into a bit of a hermitage in the city. The Covid realaity has certainly contributed to the natural descent of my isolation. It is somewhat alarming uncintextualized, but when I really think about my goes and what I need to be getting done right now at this point in my life the the relative isolation makes perefect sense.

The chaos of the year snapped my holding patten and forced me into taking a necessary risk. I believe the portal experience I have just had will allow me to move forward engaging in all my desire activities with focus and flow. I have many facets to my life. Some of them I would characterize them as assets, sometimes I would characterize them as liabilities. I would like to all in all be an asset, to my family, to the people around me. My goal is to be able to write and find time for a little bit of music once I have fully transitioned to my tech job, and at this point in my life I am very clear on what I want out of a job and what I am willing to give to a job. How I am willing to work that job. And what kind of balance I want to have. The job does not have to be some great humanitarian cause, but it should be a necessary role with some specialized skill that challenges me to continue learning and broadening my understanding of the technological sector. This is a truly exciting commitment. I am making the plunge but at the saeme time I feel this almost desperation to get out some literary output, not because I am hot toi get to the presses, but because writing is just such a powerful ground force in my life, the centrifugal force stirred up by this massive life change and the time and effort I have had to belt and strap into it to get some momentum going has truly been humbling and something that I am proud of, but it has also inspired me to write. I have written thousands of handwritten pages that I am now working through to spin tino letter s and essary and sotries and a novel project of two. The whol thing is a bit batty, because I really should be fully focused on Coding and not trying to spit my attention, but such are the varied longs of the herat-mind. I am left with little to do, but follow and do what I can to improve my effiecienty in order to catch up with myself.

The letter writing project has turned into this really interesting experinment in voice. Since each letter has an audience of one it seems like a good means to get a little closer to conscious all of the milloi unconscious decisions one makes on topic choice and word selection when communication g with a specific individual with a specific shared history (or not) and a certain rapport (or not) establish over many years (or not). I find I have a vastly different flow whether I am rattling away to an old friend who shares similar literary tastes as me— I can be freer, a bit more randomn, tonal, satirical, ambiguous, while with my mother, for example, I am much more on guard, conscious of a tone control that won’t offend or confuse or feel snobbishly baroque etcetera.

Chicago, Ill.

01/04/2021

Dear Patricia,

I am not looking for a garden. I am looking for a practice that I can partake in right here, now immediately. Not in a pretentious, I m living in art and am so pure or some jazz, but in a I am living in life which itself is a creative act, generative, sustaining, breathing, expanding.

This last turn around the sun has been a significant for us here on W. Cuyler Ave. Mightily so.

Maybe I think up an alter ego. Yes, Vidar, That’s write. Vidar has got to get some writing done.

Ever Doomward on

A moon into our journey

we passed a bob of seals,

and though they barked fair-warning

our ears were dumb with zeal.

Heedless ahead we sailed and sailed,

Ever doomward on.

**Entropy**

Lixil, bow;

BainCapital too.

And the Antlers’ Yuru-chara,

and my American Standard—  bow.

Cranes fly from Piscataway,

and the boys of natsu play

a double bill on Deer Isle,

while I make my way to Key Biscayne Bay,

Les and Mary to style my miles.

All along U.S. 41 loping lines like kanji in the sun:

*Your oysters shall be but stardust in the sea*—

Not merely a matter of A or B,

for a third shoulders next to creation and rest,

she too, in part, the price of entry—

entropy.

***The Beauty of the Day***

Oh, the beauty of the day—

the peak to compliment the trough.

I am glad to be here with you.

Shall we let be that which shall be?

Butter on my toast in the morning.

Bitter coffee in my mug with cream.

Chopin and a window—

a warm morning dream.

And out?

A wrangled over expanse—

a land possessed

to some degree or another

since our kind first wriggled up

from behind the horizon line.

Say, I’ve got some

cerebral centerfolds to show you—

Some real origami of the mind.

Violence ripening on the vine.

Like Solomon say—

all in good time.

**A nutcracker came to town**

(Dec. 2011-Jan. 2021)

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.

1/7/2021

And I add to this letter like it is important, because it is important and my fingers move with the guitar playing as if I am playing guitar and not hitting key to key across the board in front of me. I am making the most of this, I am trying to make the most of this. I am making the most of this and doing what I can to get done, get through, get out and over,. I hope you are getting out and over and I hope using this kind of language with you is all right. To intuit what one other person knows, understandings, desires, needs, To be a family, caught together in a time and a time. Temporal love and temporal gloom. We are in a room and you are in a room and it is cold where I am and it is cold where you are. Chicago hovers just above freezing and I type at my desk in an act of defiance against my good sense. My ticket to economic freedom is stamped with zeros and ones, and yet my ticket to spiritual fulfillment is stamped with all the other characters.

Writing for me is a spiritual act. It is a settling act. Not in which I attempt to paper up an incomplete system or take to task those who have somehow run against my schemes, but to get beyond those emotions and particulars that hem us in to these feelings and perspectives. I know on some level that these perspectives cannot be escaped. We are stuck behind our wall and we’re lucky if we can boor a peep hole through to the light of day, but we are still only able to feast on shadows that play and dart and jump around before us. I am an iterative being. I need to iterate. My basic plan here is to get tech literate and to find a niche in the tech industry to drill into.

The first step of this has been to build basic tech skills

JS/CSS/HTML/GIT/TESTING/RUBY/RAILS/SQL

This is my general focus. This is the suite that will technically prepare me to work in the next chapter of my life.

Simaltaneously I am seeking ways to settle my body and settle my mind. Meditation, yoga, marijuana have all bee a big part of this. Tarot cards, Chakra, Osteopathy, Qigong, Tai-chi, TM, prayer, fasting, ritual…

I am seeking silence. There has been a lot of noise, I have spent this year seeking silence. It is not in alcohol. It is not in entertainment. It is not in fear. It is not in politics.

My family has drifted right as I have drifted left. My radicalism is complacency. My lack of righteous rage seems to enrage my right family. The family went RIGHT, I LEFT.

My mother connected SALVATION to the TRUMPED up CANCEL CULTURE. Again tying TRUMP and his administration directly into being the deliverer of the Lord’s message. Trying to wrap my mind around Trump being the messenger of the Lord really pushed me into some new territory.

It’s below freezing in Montreal today. Chicago is hanging around freezing all week.

11/23/2020

Thought of you in the fall as the days were shortening and growing colder. Thought of you in the spring as the world began to open up. Thought of the music that you have been making. Thought about the creations. The processes. The preparation. The middle miles of any process. The recovering. The nourishing. The settling. The silence. What noise do you seek out? What silence?

12/26/2020

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

Practicing strength.

Practicing breath control.

Calming to breath.

Calming to work through what you need to get to the work that you need to do.

Making small changes where need be.

Chasing the dragon with improving practices.

My life, a sort of Nordic hope ode.

Big, bold, loving of the day.

Strong, expanding.

Letting the glow flow straight through you.

2/3/2021

Have appreciated Jane and Kathy’s moves that they have posted on-line. Over 40 and semi-obsessed with stretching, I am wondering about their limbering regimes.

**Cold**

People pelting other people’s cars

with iron-ore pellets

from slingshots

from parsonage windows to parking lots—

April and cold—

Long cold—

Cold long after the bay breaks up—

Slow, cold start to track—

Shuffle in line indoors,

suck dry air up and down stairs—

Or out—

cold spring in lungs, very cold,

cough from cold so cold,

cough but run,

coughing, but still running in the cold.

**Color for a Colorless Season**

Color to remind one of spring, full spring—

not cruel, early, unblossomed spring,

not moody, doom-gray, still as yet, unbudded spring,

and certainly not sudden snowstorm spring,

not with her frozen, strangled maidens—

composed, supine, dead and yellow in the snow.

**Golden Maples / White desert at dusk**

Phoned home to a dead dial tone.

Sought solace under the golden maples of Rosehill,

behind the concrete ramparts where the rich dead have their stone homes:

compact, efficient like the ice shacks in winter on the Bay of the Bear—

orange flags fanned out in the snow, marking catches as they come.

And three boys in the twilight far out on the white desert in the cold—

Three boys trudging and sliding and pushing and joking and cussing in the cold.

Where we have known better and we have not known better.

And the history of the world is in the water below the ice—

Where fish do not die in their cold bloodedness—

And above— we three, release our beings

breath by breath into the darkening dusk.

On a Rabbit moon, in a Rat year,

with a train horn blowing low across the bay.

***While the Pines Genuflect against the Walls***

Dusk swimming off the dock,

blue day becomes blue night—

fire crackles on the fourth of July.

Sirens rent the deep wood’s peace—

freezing mother’s blood in her waterbed.

A freight-train wind is coming—

huddle in the paneled hall.

Wait it out—

while the pines genuflect

against the walls.

**Trump**. The word in such phrases as a *trumped up affair*, *trumpery*, etc., is the same words 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.