[**current**](#current) **|** [**connections**](#connections)

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.

11/10/21 **=>** What a fall. Travel. and responsibiltiies and dehibilitating sickness. And health issues when responsibilities do not stop. What a seasoning season. There is a reason most parents are tougher than their children. Being genetically so similar I propose that it is this seasoning, these dragging seasons of travel and sickness, deadlines and dead mornings when we accumulate our grit. OUr red dust film, inurring us to weather to some extent, to accidents, to mysteries, head down into headline, we head long like crazed alchemists at the essences just beyond.

11/10/21 **=>** Wednesday morning. Trying to fashion a web capture my thoughts in flight. Morning light early, car sounds from the streets, low lowing of the cattle cud shuffling off to their offices. Me still out of work and ticking. Chasing writerly and coderly intuitions through digital deserts, isolated spaces.

11/10/21 **=>** Morning breaks and I am back hacking at my hyperlinked novella. Manic in my process of becoming. Unraveling. Cut off and under the gun. Bumbling.

11/10/21 => Running barefoot in the night, a quick snapping stride that I have been building up since summer. A strange little side project to help balance out my crumpling form.

10/24/2021

It had been saying rain all week. We’d had to move the party up two days. Instead of a Sunday afternoon “Animal Predator” seventh birthday extravaganza, we’d do it on Friday- the kids would come straight from school or chess club or aftercare. We’d all gather at 4:00 in our back courtyard on Cuyler. Autumnal color up and down our leafy street. Witches at their cauldrons in windows. Bones and skulls scattered

Concrete and cemement and ivy green and gone orange and red creeping up the wall and the chain link at the top and the the tracks and then the deep blue of the late afternoon sky and they roaring and rizing and the metra northshore obscures the sky and banshee races south towards downtown. Where is even the next Metra stop after Lawerence? I should look at a map.

We’d string the crepe paper and colorful bunting and set up a table with some snacks and later the chocolate cupcakes with woodland creature plastic decorative toppers and the aluminum foil wrapped owl pellet cake pops- a mouth watering combination of chocolate dipped mix of cake batter and frosting with secret ingredient dry, crunchy Ramen noodles to simulate the mouse femours and shrew skulls found in the actual owl pellets that the kids would be disceting after a few rounds of *Birds of Prey*-- a game involving dropping badminton birdies from the various levels of or three stories of porches into the back courtyard while a child in an animal mask attempts to swipe the falling birdies out of the air with a butterfly net, and before the *Woodland Creature Scavenger Hunt* where the children while wearing woodland creature masks will scurry around our yard collecting bits that have been stached around for them while the two big bad predetors-- a Kodiak Bear and a shifty eyed owl-- betsy and I with grocery bags over our heads that betsy has cleverly drawn an alarming bear and a convincingly predatorial owl on the other. The singing, the cupcakes and cake pops and then the pinata, of course, also a giant owl pellet. This one dissected less delicately. Instead of delicately probing this “owl pellet” with a tooth pick, we’d whack it with a big stick we found in the yard with a short nub on one end that some of the livelier kids used to impale the giant turd shaped pianta like they were gaffing a sea creature. When the pellet finally popped, it burst forth tuffs of faux fur and plastic bones from ripped apart dollar store decorative plastic skeletons as well as a bit of candy. The kids were delighted. Chipmunk, Weasel, Badger, Squirrel

Now, Sunday, waiting for the rain. The party a success. Two more parties attended on Saturday as Esme and her classmates tick one by one their seventh rotation round the sun. And we sit around the breakfast table chatting about predatory wasps (Mud Daubers) and attempt to tune out Helena’s whining which somehow doesn’t completely destroy

10/16/2021

October 16th-- the fall is upon us. Crisper weather now-- partial sun, mid-fifties, everything has changed since the deluge. The rain fell fervently and with abandon. The first truly wild rain we’ve had since the summer. It made me realize that we have largely missed the dragging wet days of autumn when saturated leaves in various hues of transformation mottle the sidewalks and shake down like confetti-- bon voyage to the season.

Our family bike has been a wonderful addition to our stable of transportation modes. Moving open air with the girls and eliminating the car-parking contingency of our outings provides some pretty free floating moments of commute that would otherwise be all shot through with inertia, waiting, congestion, jockeying with other tonnage as the whole city rushes all at the same hour-- conspiring each against the other, to choke the other’s way, complicate and prolong each pilgrims trajectory.

At home we continue to keep it cosy, musing about more space, wondering at the sequence of evens that will lead us to homeownership or a least a significant move-- somewhere away, somewhere farflung perhaps-- regrionally. Honestly, hopefully, not though. Despitre its limitations and constraints m eight by eight foor cell at least has a ten foot ceiling. THer is breathing room above, there is solidity below my feet.

I am one year on from the Ides of October when in parallel with my tech study I launched into an intuitively driven embrace and engagement with my mid-life crisis-- a knotty snarl of aging and frayed relationships and the fragmented social state of being a parent without a professional network or identity I have been failing at times this year to ground my identity. I have been flailing and inefficient and in order to buckle down and force movement in the creative and technical aspects of my life I have descended into this cloistered, minimal existence-- mostly eschewing social media, attempting to make my decafto answer to most new things “NO”. And the I get sentimental and Guns and Roses are playing sweet child of mind and Slashes hook is reverberating all over the northside and I hold my child and read to her in the white round back Mod chair that Marcel that shreaded the arms of and the busyness of the day is done and I suddenly have the wherewithal to text my rock-and-roll friend from collect. The beer dud and the I decide to call instead, because no one calls any more-- they certainly do not call me, but I call him and he is actually in Chicago, just a couple of miles away and he has just put in his two weeks with his boss-- a brewery owner-- over beers on his way back from picking up a stove in Indianapolis. He’s wondering if I want to meet up for a drink. I do not actually. I am fully in settled in for the night mode. I just put my daughter to sleep. I am thinking about sleep myself. I am tired. I have been coding . I have a book going *In Patagonia,* I would like to go there for a minute and then probably drift off and then wake up tomorrow and repeat the same slogging procedure of confronting my digital and analogue dislocation.

Is learning this heroic thing of this shameful thing.

His brother who was his best man is an ass… or at least has an inoperable interface. His “best friend” is a narcissistic maniac. His wife is depressed and put upon and distant. His mother is aggressive and judgemental and distant.

A racing mind…

I have been feeling

I have spent the majority of this year unmoored -- shoved away from the security of a harboring shore-- trying to get out of the land and ocreans repulsing eddy-- forlornly having away like poor soul in Ambrose Bierce’s “The Open Boat”-- can I get to the open sea without breaking up in the waves? Without succumbing to the pressure-- my tasks-- make bread for my babies are very reduced-- I have pthough all need me and want me and wish me the best on a collective, universal level. We want one another to be okay, we need one another to be okay, we don’t want other people’s non-flourishing to impede our passage. We are a swimmers. Some begin to flit and flail and grab out and lash out at the people around them. We also desire joy in this life and growth and grounding.

I have spent much of this year afraid and attempting to articulate my fears and confront them in the most, banal way possible-- sitting with them-- trying to flush them out and express them-- trying to attach their nervous, wild energy to some settled, actionable, concrete moves.

I am ambitions, but do my ambitions and values line up? How do you want to spend your time? I would never want to live a bohemian lifestyle. I would never ant to be stuck at a computer. I would never want to be a salesman. How do you want to spend your time?

One of my rationalizations for smoking a lot of weed has been to change my mind, to so thoroughly send my mentality to another dimension promoting an evolutionary change in life patterns.

Html, css/sass, http/https, ruby, javascript, jquery, ajax, rspec, .erb, irb, emmet, git, github, sql, mySql, Mongodb, postgresql, dsl, orm, etc.

09/22/2021

It is the first day of Fall. It rained in the morning. Caught me on my walk down Lincoln Avenue to Trader Joe’s for some milk and other breakfast groceries. I sheltered under the awning of an Accountancy across the street from the big pillared, Hollywood backlot bank façade that no longer houses a bank.

The Stern Clothing Ghost sign looks sharp -- faded black and read on a brick wall -- was covered by the building next door for a few decades, but now the building is gone, revealing the cool vintage surpisingly well preserved.

Just began working on a Web Development platform called Sinatra. A bunch of all-of-a-sudden connection moments have occurred recently, making me feel like the pace of pennies dropping is picking up. I am asking better questions now. More precise one. My questions are getting more sophisticated. I am anticipating issues more, and sensing easily what the issue might be when things go wrong (typically the last thing I touched), but also I am beginning to truly appreciate error messages. Like your body sending you soreness to signal your injury or disfunction in your body, programs do pretty well with describing where the pain is. Next comes the slow patient work of following the subtle course of the program to work out the knot, error, undue tension or bottlenecking of function.

I think this past summer I lamented to you about testing and how it seemed cumbersome to have to learn a whole other language and style of programming to get these tests going. The beauty of the whole thing is that the style of Testing Driven Development is a beautiful concept and something that ends up doing a lot of the thinking for you by providing you with principles which if applied correctly and consistently will lead your code into an emergent design that will be both stable and appropriate, but also extensible and responsive changes.

Good design solves the current problem while leaving the system open to agilely evolving in the future to meet future and as yet unforeseeable requirements. You will never know less about your solution than right now. You are moving to solve the problem not with a deep understanding of the solution, but with a deep understanding of the problem as well as keen strategies for encircling the problem, manifesting necessary resources to address the problem and then competently applying the resources to the task.

09/17/2021

I recognize that I have to launch my tech career to get my writing off the ground. Write about stretching. Write about coding. Writing about parenting. Write about being in your 40s. Write about barefoot running and running in general. Write about why you like your neighborhood so much

* Biking to pick up along the leafy northside streets.
* Passing all the cars on Montrose at rush hour as we head to the pool.
* Being the only swimmers at the pool. The side doors open and the golden light of the late afternoon highlighting the still leafy green canopy of trees.
* Hoosier Momma’s Pie in Lincoln Square
* The Bubble Lady in the Square
* Walkability of Trader Joes, several liquor stores, Jewel, our yard

09/08/2021

Have you seen the words? (Animal Collective)

Your intestines dripping out…

Someone in my Dictionary is up to no good “Banshee Beat”

Summertime Clothes-- nice harmonies

09/04/2021

The animal joy of listening to music through head phones.

I simultaneously trying to learn app development, forge a literary career, be a good father, mitigate my addiction (somewhere in my dictionary is up to no good), and maintain my English and expand my Chinese and Spanish, a form a religion of one that wholistically meets my human and spiritual needs. I am trying to get a grip by letting go.

Cycle through, cycle through,

Sweep right round your seventeen years.

Keep in mind, its all small beer.

Swinging and missing.

Getting close, but no…

Did you know *cigar* comes from *cicada*.

And look, look—

here they come again.

Email:

**From:** Caleb Whitmer <cwhitmer92@gmail.com>   
**Sent:** Thursday, April 9, 2020 7:11 PM  
**To:** adwhitmer@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Re: Gimme Shelter...

Brother,

Greetings from Rock Hill, SC! After some deliberation, we decided to make the drive to spend my Thurs-Mon Easter vacation with Morgan’s family. Thankfully, no military blockades stopped us. Fingers crossed no interstate travel bans go into effect between now and Easter Tues.

We are doing well, both of us healthy and on the whole spending our more or less quarantined existence pleasantly. I am still going into work as educational institutions, like liquor stores, are considered essential. My work has suddenly evolved into a television studio and we are broadcasting lectures three-four nights a week for a live audiences of about a thousand people. Morgan just completed her Master’s comprehensive exams on Tues. Assuming she passes, she has only a few more essays to go for the degree.

I am trying to spend the time productively. I’ve been playing piano and redabbling in French. I am reading the Brothers Karamazov (long on my reading list) and listening to a 50 hour (!) biography of Churchill on my runs around DC and walks to and from work. I’ve just finished running here in SC and WC, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, has just pissed off John Maynard Keynes by switching England back to the gold standard. Not sure how this ends yet, but there has been some foreshadowing that this doesn’t go very well for WC.

Good on the brewery for curbside pickup! And we’ve actually done the same thing with pancake batter. Morgan has started baking sourdough bread. My understanding is that sourdough starters require some training and a good deal of that training for us has been eating sourdough pancakes (which has necessitated further training in the long battle against the so-called “Covid-15”).

How else are you all fairing? Are you still subscribing to the New Yorker? I think their coverage of New York during the pandemic has been really good. Little vignettes of a city in crisis. Any vignettes from Chicago?

Best wishes,

Caleb

23APRIL2020:

弟弟,\*

So glad to hear you two are living well through this season of shelter! Clear headed, in good health, and having

the financial wherewithal to weather this storm really puts a body in the position to get a little taste of the retired life.

I am looking forward to being retired someday. If this preview is any indication, I think betsy and I will do well at it. Though hopefully by then we will not have any small children under our constant care.

Good to hear that you’re getting some good reading in! Both visually and aurally! *The Brothers Karamazov* has been on my reading list forever as well. Remember reading the “Grand Inquisitor” chapter way back. Hope you are enjoying it. Something of that ilk maybe a little more ambitious than I can take on at the moment; I may have to save the Russian novels for the next pandemic.

My guerilla reading style of the past decade has seemingly striped me of the ability for “silent sustained reading”. I like to think that the children deserve most of the blame for this. You see they have this notion that their welfare and companionship should trump my ability to hold a sustained thought or finish even a thin chapter of a mass market paperback. They are very self-centered and helpless which is not a great combination in a roommate or roommates. Despite their machinations though, I actually just finished “The Last Wish” by Andrzej Sapkowski from his *Witcher* series. Despite some pretty cringey writing, it was a fun read! Some of the joy was akin to watching a B-movie where the good parts are good because they are so good and the bad parts are also kind of fantastic because they are just so, so bad.

I’m also just about through a slim paperback of “The Castle of Crossed Destinies” by the Italian writer Italo Calvino. Back in college I read his “If on a winter’s night a traveler” which I really liked. Calvino has been called an Italian Fabulist and he gets pretty funky with form. “If on a winter’s night…” switches back and forth alternating chapters between second person narration and a chapter of a new, totally different book (different genres etc…) even as your “second person narration self” furtive searches for the original book that he started way back in chapter one. His “Castle of Crossed Destines” is about a bunch of people who find themselves inexplicably in a castle in the middle of a forest without the ability to speak. Luckily, there is wine and a deck of Tarot cards (or as the Italians say Tarocchi) and the visitors to the Castle are then able to sort of mystically depict their Chaucer-like tales using only the images on the cards and some unexplained mind-melding.

I wondered the other day if you dip back into French from time to time. I have a book of poems by Rimbaud that is in French and English. Whenever I read a poem out of it I always try to read the French as well, which is hilarious and hackneyed, but I try to just go for it. You know, feel it, let *Spiritus Mundi* conjure up something of what Rimbaud had in his mind. Language is so wonderful, but also such a slog …or not a slog, but just a potentially bottomless abyss of time spent. My continued mission towards educated adult-like Mandarin literacy continues to forge ahead… with peaks… with plateaus…with the occasional valley slog. I have a copy of one of the most famous Kung-fu series by the most famous Kung-fu novelist Jin Yong (“The Legend of the Condor Heroes” 射雕英雄传). I have had this book in my possession for over two years and have been wanting to read it for like ten. The reading level is still a bit of a reach for me, but just this week I had a really nice reading session where it felt like my comprehension took another lurch forward. I got some of the jokes! It’s such a strange spiraling process, but one that I am (mostly) grateful for.

On the Chinese topic, two films: “Ash is Purist White” and “The Farewell”. “Ash is Purist White” is a film by Jia Zhangke, who generally makes really interesting, well-shot, simmering, slowly unfolding films. His main actor is always his wife and his films are always very humane. His films typically end up being banned in mainland China because he’s into realism a little too deep (the CCCP doesn’t always like that). “The Farewell” stars Awkwafina and is a little more heartwarming than “Ash” and was another good perspective on the contemporary Chinese scene. It may or may not have been banned on the mainland…

6:30 a.m. I am up. I am awake. I am ready to read or do some writing. I’m settling in. I have coffee. And then…what…no… Helena is awake… (sigh) she never wakes up this early.

6:45 a.m. Helena is in her highchair next to me at the table. She offers me a Crispy Oat\* and then rescinds the offer and eats it herself and then claps for herself. I am not reading or writing, but instead sipping my coffee and basking in the gummy, slightly mischievous smile of my one-year-old. There are great clouds this morning: stretched out and minced up with a lower, mountainous base glowing violet in the rising sun. The brown brick across the alley is waking up. Its reddish hue brightening with each tick forward of the sun. Helena waves to the clouds and chirps her breathy “Hi.” She is a hummer and a singer and an engaged, communicative girl all without saying much more than “Hi”. She is a full-on walker now and just seeing her cowboy saunter into a room warms me up and makes me laugh. Her manic baby zeal is contagious.

Esme’s manic 5-year-old zeal has been a bit grating of late. She is wired to be as active and engaged as possible, which is setting her up to be a good learner and engager with life, but has become, not infrequently exhausting. Through our time together this last month we have definitely gotten closer and more annoyed with each other which may just be a symptom of how close we are. She is still (mostly) a really delightful kid though. Interested in being read to at any hour of the day. Loving the films we pop out of the archives for her- Disney’s “Robin Hood”, “Mary Poppins”, “Totoro”. She plays well in the back yard and rules the garden with her adventures and projects and games. She’s definitely missing other kids though!

Sorry about the slow reply! I had a bit of a rough week balancing out my various responsibilities and projects. I think I am at some kind of a tipping point now though as I try to prioritize and screw down on what I’d most like to - during my Covid Sabbatical. I am still technically still working, but just reporting the hours that I work as we work them at home. There are things to be done, but the story being closed and the uncertainty about when it will reopen makes things tricky. And all-in-all I have decided that I am not a big fan of the work from rhythm and/or just have not figured it out/negotiated it out just yet. betsy and I did just sketch up a weekly schedule this morning where we have identified blocks of “office time” for me which should be really helpful for getting some focused work done!

Much Love,

Aaron

\*“little brother” di4di4

\* Aldi Brand Cherrios

06/02/2020-

Wish I had the day off the top of my head, but definitely worth including here is that last month Caleb broke the news that Morgan is expecting! They are in DC weathering out the pandemic and the social unrest… Morgan just finished up her master’s in political theory and Caleb is working for the Dominican Brotherhood.

11/03/2020

Caleb’s letter:

Dear Aaron ,

The day before the election, Morgan is showering while listening to a lecture on the American founders and Natural Law. The doorknob of the bathroom is broken, so professor Charles Kastler's slightly reedy, flat voice fills the apartment, which is small, and I am writing you a letter on an LSAT prep book I began studying with about about two weeks ago. Washington was bright and blustery today and I felt grateful to live here and grateful that I walked to work each day. Morgan is 31 weeks as of Saturday. We drove across the Potomac River, down the George Washington Parkway, to a forest on the South Bank called Turkey run near the CIA headquarters the colors aren't so brilliant here but the trees were tall and the ground muddy and we slipped up and down a winding path, then down until we had to ford a Creek by way of a few well-placed stones and by virtue of my waterproof LL bean boots. Then the bushes closed in dense like the old forest in Buckland, and we occasionally stumbled on signs of ancient settlements and a tall concrete tower with height measurements (a municipal building of some kind?) and a hearth and chimney standing naked in the trees. For a while we sat on a log fallen across the path, then returned along the narrow trail we forded the creek, climbed and wound the muddy paths and got back in our car driving back through downtown. Plywood was once again on every street level window for the first time since July. Every window but those of the restaurants squeezing in a few more customers before locking down until- win? Whatever happens, I hope it comes quick. Your brother, Caleb

11/11/2020

I have become almost cabalistic about working. I am on some sort of self-styled vision quest which in its first 40 days took me to the mountain where I lingered from the new moon of the first of the month until the rising and setting of the Halloween Blue moon that happen to fall on this inauspicious year.

We tricked and treated and burned wood in the year. The wind cruelly smothering us each in turn with gusts of plummey white smoke and pop and flash of sparks, some want to hop up into your lap like an over eager pup. And then the night long and prowling and I stretched and breathed and birthed my middle-aged self out into the All Saint’s dawn as the full moon set in the west and the sun brightened and warmed and painted in its approaching palate of desiccated nectatrine. And now back out the gate.

To the desert for these is talk of a spring that never ends— the source some say— just over there. Across the Takalimakan-like plain— take with you provisions from the mountains. Take with you what you have learned about strength and weakness, take with you the balance and the self-understanding you have acquired, move easier and move adroitly now that you have shed your excess weight and once again opened to the abundance of life.

It is this joy— this unencumbering act— this whole hearted unencumbering act.

Empower people to make the changes that matter.

Creative healing.

Intuitive healing

* Balanced and open
* Disciplined, but discipline grounded in balance not severity. The discipline is part of the balance, not the dictator of it.

11/14/2020

Dear Caleb,

Loved your letter, every last letter! Have been meaning to write too, to you. Been dipping into a lot of different books of late. Has been great! Ordered you a book off Amazon, should arrive to you soon, by drone I believe. It’s a book that has been delighting me for many years – a dictionary of sorts, but where every entry feels sort of like a little poem, or at the very least seems to suggest one, one already written, or one still but yet to write: “Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.” Definitely a top three tome for me. And to think my copy has traveled full 25 odd years, ever since once upon a summer’s day –

a library sidewalk sale:

pack a brown paper grocery bag full of books—

each full bag five dollars!

I am excited for you to prepare for the LSAT. I really enjoyed preparing for the LSAT. A few months up in a cabin in the woods in North Minnesota. No election year angst. No job by to study and exercise. I was running and biking and swimming and doing yoga a couple of times a day. My body got in pretty good shape.

The goddamned mechanical pencils I used snapped and snapped under my exam intense hands. I remember totally falling apart in the logic puzzle section, and the snap of the pencil became the soundtrack of the snap of my logical train. In my prep for the test it is one of my strongest sections. On test day I had to scramble and fill in a good number of bubbles without even reading the questions. My 162 was a solid score. No crazy good, but certainly good enough to get my law career going. A friend of mom’s I can’t even remember who now gave here a book to give to me called Law School Confidential. I read the first chapter, the gist of which was—hey, seriously, if there is anything else you want to do right niw, travel, learn a language, go do that, if you have any doubt that law school is the right thing to be doing right now, then go do that other thing cause law school will be here. Do that other thing and then come back and rip the head of this thing. It was sound advice, basically, if you are going to do it, do it! Life many things, if you do it, I mean really do it and get into it, you will have a rewarding experience, if you just sort of tepidly get in there and half-ass the effort that whole thing is going to be fucked. You are going to be miserable and the thing just won’t work.

I suppose its like anything that involves commitment. You are either committed or you are not. If you are committed good things happen and the whole system can evolve fully and to maturity, if you are not committed then the system will never close its process loop and will be leaky a fuck, both letting in distracting factors that will nudge (sledge) you off track, or letting out aspects of the work/projects/ etc. slip away without have the proper track lain to bring that freight-train on home. My metaphor has totally gotten away from me here, but I think you get my point, commitment is key. Keeping your eye on the horizon line even after you work your ass off to keep one foot moving in front of the other.

Abundance is birthed by sacrifice.

Death leads to life and life leads to death.

George Floyd, Kyle Rittenhouse, Breana Taylor, Mike Pence, Rush Limbaugh, Nancy Pelois, AOC, AOC, RBG, NSA, FDIC, DOJ,

If you could fly like a bird and take it in from 20,000 feet what would you see. If you looked at your own situation what would you see.

Disentagleing yourself from the political mess, the cultural mess, the religious mess.

I have fled to the mountain. And I found healing there. Now I have descended and am trekking my way across the desert towards the river, towards the sea. It should take about 40 days. It is a time of scarcity. The weather has been amazing. My writing is beginning to build. Not in some sort of spontaneous outpouring of ideas and images, but something more deliberate, something more layered, subject to editing, deletion, completion is important, sure, but the bulk of the work is done in the middle miles- between the impetus and the conclusion. I have endeavored to crave those middle miles.

Having initially worked to focus myself in and allow my adrenal glands to lead the charge, I ended up with an out-of-whack spine and bad circulation in my legs. Plus, I was drinking too much. Not like black out drunk or something, but alcohol had become a mirror to my morning coffee. Which from some angles I am find with, though the rub comes when the coffee opens the door to getting things done, the alcohol begins to wind things down, draw sleep near. At the end of the day, after working and looking after the girls and working to stay on the same page with betsy, not to mention fighting off the ambient sense of uncertainty and tension. So many sirens everyday here, the constant chest rumble of jetplanes overhead. An almost unnerveringly warm November. 2014 after Esme was born, November was so cold. It felt like the 4th trimester as we bedded down in our third floor apartment and took the baby in shifts. I watched a lot of overnight movies at this time with headphones as I held the baby, or I sang to here from Youtube karaoke, overcoming the desperation of her cry with my enthusiastic crooning and rhythmic rocking and soothing sways. These were long days, but a month off of work helped me step away from that stress and focus fully on the new baby. In December I had record sales, basically making up for November and pulling within a few thousand dollars of being the top selling watch salesman, despite the “lost month”. It was one of those wonderful moments when things just sort of “work themselves out”. The previous November I was recovering from my double hernia surgery, thankfully, still my most invasive medical procedure ever and most intensive recover process. A process that was marked by a lot of sitting around and typing.

Adidas Ultraboost PB. Slurge or not, definitely well-deserved with the miles that you are getting in, I hve not been getting many miles as I have been extremely homebound writing letters and studying code and freewriting. And doing this interesting “Infiniti Notebooke™” loop where I free write on any topic that pops into my head in any form I feel inspired to jump into- poem, song, short story, essay, letter, study review, notes from what I am reading, marginalia of what I am reading, language bits, scraps, images, ideas, thoughts, intentions, needs, desires, recalibrating nudges, goal-setting, accountability, motivation, sense of accomplishment, vocation building, identity grounding, mind-centering, path to right silence.

My understanding of faith cannot be disentangled with writing. There are stops. There are starts. The wise definitively say- yes! Movement and visuals. You see it was never so bad. And pre-grieving all I have to lose. And it broke my heart when you told me you’ve been staying home to pre-greive all you have to lose. You got caught in a choice and wound up wasted, whiling away your years pre-grieving all you have to lose.

Will we know you are Christians by their love? Cause I don’t feel that love. I feel your judgement. I feel your political partisanship. I feel your angst. I feel your apocalyptic anxiety and I wholesale reject it. There must be another way. And there is. There are 7 billion different ways and counting. Get fucking used to it.

Why Rush Limbaugh is fine for America. How can we recognize these political realities and ride that line between not being totally cynical about it, but also not losing my shit over it in some sort of partisan hissy-fit.

Can we just stop being Republicans and Deomocrats and just be Americans.

11/19/2020

Dreaming of reading Wendell Berry and living in the city and working in web and app development. Continuing on with my Chinese study, but not with the sweaty unsettled feeling that my vocational best bet had run its course and was up for reassessment, it was time to cut our losses or collect our gains, or whatever necessary sequence of moves needed to be made to get clear, get free, get on and into the next thing, immediately.

Running to “In Rainbows” The Reckoner, I might be Wrong.

Going out and getting lost and then finding my way back to writing and Chinese and finding my way into coding and tech and overcoming my sense of digital dislocation and fragmentation. Finding a way to force all of these disparate, fragmentary interests and commitments (willing or unwilling) through a centering, focusing workflow, allowing for optimization and prioritization of execution and task handling/management.

11/20/2020

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.

11/28/2020

* What do you make of Fox news?
  + Dismayed at the campaigning against “The Squad”
  + Misleading headlines (sometimes incredibly so!)
  + Free and fair personalities
  + The Murdoch Family and the Hearst family would be an interesting comparison.
  + How to discuss this stuff without everyone just feeling shitty?
  + Team building political conversation- Where is the consensus?
  + What are we actually talking about right now? What exact statue? Who is messing with it? What is the background? Has there been a movement against this statue in the past? Who are these people that want it down?
  + Against idealism.

What does it say about where we are at that we are all kind of relieved at the level of violence that played out over the election season. There were deaths… at least 4 maybe more…

12/13/2020

C:\prototype>log\_book\_3

Code IN (3) | Code OUT (5) | Write IN (6) | Write OUT (7)

6

12/14/2020: IN 08:54

The LSAT. What sort of Law. Seems like a very DC move. Definitive move.

Path of least resistance. Relatively low threshold of time and effort to get into industry. It worked, but I knew what I was signing up for. I didn’t cae. I couldn’t either be conflicted about the less than ideal working conditions, rhythm, or I could suck it up and just figure out how to make the job work.

It worked. I tripled my income, put us in a position for betsy to not have to work and I learned how to sell. I had long thought that something about selling really cut crossways through my nature. On the one hand, I am certainly apt to point out the positive, or I try at least to put a positive spin on something that somebody gives me.

When I was teaching I was always pretty good at integrating students feedback into the class discussion etc.

I don’t care what you buy, but if you buy something my hourly rate shoots way up. That variable hourly rate was the kicker. Especially since, compared to my English teaching the hourly was high and the hours we double and then on top of that if I sent something out the door I was likely to net somewhere between 25% and 200%+ of what I would make in a week teaching English I would knock out in that single hour, or however long the transaction took.

I signed my deal with America. With capitalism. We had babies. We lived in a city, but went traditional, single income, female homemaker. The deal was simple— we’ll give you an opportunity to work and make money on our capricious terms and you just need to suck it up. There has been a lot of sucking it up going on, which is probably why getting the message from Hans to suck up my political beliefs cut so deep.

Running up against power all the time. Policies and procedures were meant to hem everyone in so they had to grovel to management to get product. They used access to product as a management too. We had to run the gauntlet for clients, we had to run the gauntlet of clients to find a client that we trusted enough to push for, because if we pushed for a client, finally got approval and then had the client flake out on us that would be a lose of time, effort, and credibility.

You are only as good as your next sale. Caught in a very tenuous position between a demanding clientele and a disorganized, vengeful, punitive, harried self-centered management team. The owner, had just turned 60 and was in the prime of his career. He had grown his business to four stories, but had hardly expanded the management structure of his business. Plugging gaps by handing out more hats for people to wear, or at least just handing out hats to those people related or loyal to him, whether or not these roles were actually fulfilled.

Should come up with a list of all the “initiatives” that were thrown out, but never followed up on.

At a moments notice you need to be ready to give a stellar presentation on a $200,000 timepiece, but we also need you to make sure that bathroom gets cleaned and the sidewalk stays clear and that the shipping department keeps trucking, meticulous taking in and sending out high-value merchandise.

If one had been so inclined, you could walk straight through our store and into the vault without a locked door between the audacious individual and our vault of gold, diamond encrusted watches.

One of the stores had been even been robbed.

Emphasized and crowed about every “amazing” thing “the Boss” did for us. “Free Lunch” on the weekends, so we didn’t have to take time away from the floor to figure out lunch, so we would eat their shitty fastfood. The owner’s children would order their own food separately. They would arrive late, leave early, maybe show up for their days on the schedule, despite being “the key” on the schedule meaning the person with the responsibility and power to open and close the store.

Waiting outside the store in the winter for someone to come and let us in because nobody has a key to get into the store. Keys drifting in and out of the store without being tracked. Merchandise moving in and out of the store with hazy procedures around them. Watches in pockets and what not. Oopened doors for mistakes. Accidents. Extra-procedural situations. All the while we have the message of doing “anything” for a sale. And not ever saying “no”….

Knives are very dangerous and they kill a lot of people. They almost kill as many people as guns do. I’m looking at the stats.

People saying something that may or may not be true, but said in such a way that I am right, I am expressing a larger sentiment that guns are really not so dangerous, especially when compared to knives. What you want to go out and round up all the knives now?

Rhetoric is not dead. Rhetoric is alive and well. A lot of rhetorical is about definition of TERMS and concepts. Framing the conversation in such a way. It is all about the framing. Words can PROVOKE, FRAME, REFRAME, SHUTOUT, IMPLY, FLIP, CONTRADICT, and so on and on….

The Supreme Court decision put me at ease. That Texas lawsuit was actually the moment I was going to worry. It was a benchmark that I chose as a good litmus test on the reality of our political system. It passed the test. That lawsuit was an embarrassment and in principle it was attempting to perpetuate the same inconceivable attack on our democratic process. Our process won! Trump took it on, but the process won, the system won.

Does this move the needle on my life… not, but at least our system is intact, we are not devolving into some kind of constitutional crisis or a civil war… which it feels like exactly like what Trump wants. He wants to be able to say that it was the most contested election in the history of the U.S., leaving out the fact that the contesting was completely without merit.

This is the Trump MO. Create a crisis and then frame it so you come out the other side looking good against the crisis that you framed, regardless of the actual merits.

This is a bit like the whole abortion thing. I feel like you are trying to gaslight me into believing that this is the only important issue and that support of the right side of this issue is the only proof required of being a good person, a good American, a good moral, Christian person. I chafe at the rank simplification of this. This intensely dishonest framing of the situation.

Somehow these things are all connected. What is the line through them?

02/10/2021

Received the book and your letter and postcard in the mail yesterday. It arrived on our snow strewn street. Our backalley as impassable as I have ever seen it. Great dripping icicles from our third story roof. Landlord out in the morning wielding a shovel to knocnk them down without skulling someone. I purchased a bottle of whisky for myself for my birthday it has horses on it and is from BLAH, BLAH Kentucky, none of this has any meaning. If none of this has any meaning then we have no meaning withoun us because this are the discrete components of usness. But the rub comes in the balance. How do we balance this lottery balls all fluffed up and roiling in our heads and bes and bellies.

The vocation al selection is a big one, a cahllanging one. I have certainly attempted to take the ORGANIC route. The UNFOLDING route. The exploratorial route. The follow your interests route. The follow your dreams route. Sort of . I have always had guardrails on my dedicationto writing. I have endeaveored to draw it near to my sense of being and have it inform my sense of being. I have attempteto be open. I have attempted to be thoughtful. But if all of this is simply about creativng a persecitive recipe for living then count me out. Beuase ultimately that just gets realy fucking meta. I do this so that I can do this. Does this give that meaning. Does this wish that into existence. And what about the inverse. Time spent upon this project strangles the other projects in their beds and slithers out self-satisfied and hungry for the day. We are cyphers and our perspective will be feed. There is only power in interpretation. Interpretation allows us to imbibe at our own speed without being faus grais force fed. We can’t digest so many ideas and beyond that ideas are not discrete elements they are intreicately woven matrixes of meaning, nearly always dependent on cultural and historical context. Which doesn’t lessen their significance, but perhaps, perchance, if we step back for a minute, we can acknowledge the subjectiveliy and the incompleteness of all knowledge. Especially if the discrete knowledge is something that can really only be experientially understood. For example, the health benefits of a low meat diet can easily be grasped intellectually, but the experiential realization of this wisdom at a digested, lived level has a great plain of cultural and personal messages that will seek to throw you off this trail, this path, this experiment. We make much of habit. We make much of patterns.

I do get caugt and come out and wrangle Helena a bit because bets has entered her “hands-thrown-up” mde which is worrying because its only 10:30 a.m. and she is on the couch half-reading to Esme while Helena fails around and whicnes arbout either not having her socks and sandals on or being upset about betsy trying to oput her socks on. Helena seems to be insisting on wearing her slipperings without socks, but then freaks out when I put her slippers on without socks and seems to want her socks on too. She tearfully climbs down from my lap and shuffles over to the couch for her socks. Meanwhile Esme is on the couch, the Benadryl we gave her for an inexplicably puffy left eyelid, like extremely pufy— cartoonishly puffy, seemingly painfully puffy and itchy, but not…

She is staying off online class today.

02/11/2021

“Washington Monument By Night”

* Carl Sandburg

1.

The stone goes straight.

A lean swimmer into night sky

Into half-moon mist

2.

Two trees are coal black.

This is a great white ghost between

It is cool to look at.

String men, strong women come here.

3.

Eight years is a long time

to be fighting all the time.

4.

The republic is a dream.

Nothing happens unless first a dream.

5.

The wind bit hard at Valley Forge one Christmas

Soldiers tied rags on their feet

Red footprints wrote on the snow…

… and stone shoots into stars here

… into half-moon mist tonight.

6.

Tongues wrangled dark at a man.

He buttoned his overcoat and stood alone.

In a snowstorm, red hollyberries, thoughts,

he stood alone.

Spirt of my silence I can hear you,

But I’m afraid to be near you.

And I don’t know where to begin.

And I don’t know where to begin.

Somewhere in the desert there’s a foreest,

And an acre before us

But I don’t know where to begin

But I don’t know where to begin.

Again I lost my strength completely,

Oh, be near me tired old mare

With the wind in her hair.

Amethyst and flowers on the table,

Is it real or a fable?

Well I suppose a friend is a friend

And we all know how this will end

Chimney swift that find me be my keeper,

Silhouette of the cedar

What is that song you sing for the dead?

What is that song you sing for the dead?

I see the signal searchlight strike me,

In the window of my room.

Well, I got nothing to prove.

Well. I got nothing to prove.

I forgive you mother, I can hear you

And I long to be near you

But every road leads to an end,

Yes, every road leads to an end

Your apparition passes through me,

In the willows and five red hens.

You’ll never see us again.

You’ll never see us again.

In some ways, many ways I am very grateful for my time in the retail world. I had to make my own way. I went from one of the shittiest positions in the luxury goods industry to one of the “best” and I had done it by myself while bringing a couple of kids into the world and establishing a baseline economic hold and security for my family. I had used my Mandarin to make money. I had improved my Mandarin. I had discovered my aptitude and interest for computer. An aptitude and interest that weren’t like a lightening realization, but have been cultivated through a gradual and intentional “opening up” to technology and the use of technology to create lightweight, adaptable, responsive, easily maintainable systems for growth, reference, learning, and grounding to resolve my digital dislocation and vastly increase my comfort level and competency of exploring and employing with digital technologies.

Totoro: girls love of it. Our love of it. Totoro cake. Totoro living in our Christmas try. She sings the song and wants to play it. It’s nice to tap into that kiddy fandom, without having to contest with the McDonald’s tie in. Culture is manufactured. Culture is created. It is truly a beautiful thing, but beauty can also hide ugliness and malignancy. McDonald’s could be framed around a pleasant story of a retired man minority man connecting with his ambitious, enterprising son or grandson for coffee and breakfast at one of the many community restaurants. Or you could indict the whole bullshit institution for doing much to create a culture that produces a disproportionately obese and unhealthy populous. Many people thrive in this system and have the wherewithal over time to find their niche, to settle into their value system, both on a writ large ideological level, but also on a street level pragmatic “how am I going to manage my day and find some sort of flow of consumption and production that doesn’t lead me to losing my mind as I am surrounded by all of these swirling and contradictory messages which I must either react to and oppose, agree with and acquiesce to, or disagree with and absorb. So often these poltically spun asides- “implying that the windmills were a big part of the blame for the suffering in Texas”, that the Biden administration was somehow responsible for Katie not getting her maternity leave approved. You rancor makes you saw things that really don’t make any sense and also pollute a perfectly non-partisan conversation with your dogbreath partisan grievance. I find it offense and annoying and I have for a long time. And if you want to take this as me “cancelling you”, my message for you is grow up. Your politics make you unkind. Your politics are an earthly consolation. You are attempting to turn your eternal truth into earthy power. You are framing an eternal struggle as an earthly one. Now I am not saying that you are wrong to care about politics and care deeply or even to engage, but when this this comes to dominate you conversation patterns and your thinking and the way that you see the world- the good people, the bad people, the people who care about American, the people who don’t care about America, this is an earthy consolation. This is an attachment that is inevitable as all attachments are inevitable, but it is one that I see shading your, in my opinion, deep, more powerful, more radiant, more inviting messages.

Crank: an eccentric person, especially one who is obsessed by a particular subject or theory, a bad-tempered person

02/18/2021

Alan Watts:

The limitations of words and thinking

Intellectual net to catch the fish of reality… reality is like water… there is nothing to catch. All the universe is like water, it is fluid, always changing.

The only way to survive in the water, when we are all just falling apart, is to learn how to swim. Relax. Breath correctly. The water holds you up. You become the water.

Alan Watts quote- what is real… something profound that maybe relates to the *Time of Gifts* a little more directly… but anyway, something about the saliency of having just this week reading Alan Watts and listening to a few short lectures by him. And I had been planning on heading off on my merry way, but then reading in *Time* and wondering about the genre- was it an autobiography, literary fiction or so strange melding of the two ala W.G. Sebald. And just when you are thinking that you don’t know up from down with what to expect, the author makes a level and direct reference , almost sort of off the cuff to Alan Watts who apparently wrote about the author in one of his books. Which is interesting to make that connection, especially as I was drawn to Alan Watts following these intuitive pathns that had already lead me through a strong symbolic journey to a mountain and then to a river which is the source. And the mouatin is the center or everything and its everywhere. And OPcaing all of this esoteric discovery, the IDES, a tradition that I thought up as a mock celebration half way through any month and then honed in as a good mid-month goal setting date for things and then still occasionally with some sort of celebratory bent. Why not, it’s the IDES after all!!. Drink up good brother!. Our discipline in the waters makes the possible. And then I lost my job and the cash flow life blood of our family began coming from The Illinois Department of Services (IDES).

Alan Watts living up in Druid Heights which can’t be so very far from where we all gathered for your rehearsal dinner. What hospitality! What warmth! What a wedding! What a gathering! Displacement. Change. Peace with change. Longing for change. Longing ofr the orad. For learning and engaging. Having followed a somewhat intuitive path, following my interests in a fitful, desultory, lets see where this leads sort of way. Allowing things to develop. It has worked with the greatest relationship in my life. Betsy and I were blessed with ample time time settle into ourselves and our lives together and our values and our vision for the trajectory of our lives and we are still seetling togetherAn dn I realized that it is not a journey at all, there is no destination, or rather, we are al all quite aware of the destination and we can celebrate it or rue it or anything in between, but on the way to that end that is reached at the terminus of all journeys, we can choose our modes and shape our modes. And seek expression and understanding and balance. We can seek all of these things, but must accept that there will always be challenges and things that grate and things that are unideal and loose ends, off-putting comments, unkindness, misunderstandings, low-blood sugar, weariness, confusion, hurry, chaos, anxiety, defeat, surrender, release, light, wind, breath… oh to work and work unconflicted. To have before me nicely lined up taks and ample time to complete them. Oh to feel undefeated at the tender just begin. Oh, to believe that we can win. Oh, to hide that fact from all, but my pulsing breast. Nourishment in my time of rest. Westward sun. East rise, heaven climb, my mind the sun, my mind the moon, my mind the city, my mind the snow covered tombs along Hwy 19 on our way to the lake.

“I can’t” - it is okay to tell you’re child you can’t we you are trying to pack a full work day in at home in an effort to reinvent yourself as a software engineer and writer.

“What else”- sometimes your super loquacious child will ramble at you until your mind is sort of numb and uncomprehending. At this point it is permissible to respond with a friend “What else” if the child’s voice suddenly silences and it seems like they might be expecting some sort of reply or proof of interest.

Throbbing stomach! Racing pulse or busted system, burst aorta,

Was going to stretch and write, but girls needed attention.

Changed plans six times in the midst of my indecision and iterative planning.

The brilliant sun’s sundowing

The many lasting shades of its departure

I have seen 10,000 of her savage visages out my western window

Lincoln’s visage ever approaching and the flags

Of the community and Christmas and Thanksgiving.

The battle against repression.

The ceaseless search for just release.

You going west, me going east.

Can’t there finally be some abiding wisdom in the middle

For Jesus, Joseph, and Mary’s old sake.

Can’t we just simmer down and live a little?

Harvest’s hope invites the seed—

These old legs still finding new figures out

on the digital range, half-crazed, but loosely learning

and applying every little binary tidbit

I scrap into.

Running barefoot in the night, a quick snapping stride that I have been building up since summer. A strange little side project to help balance out my crumpling form.

02/19/2021

The fun part and the hard part or the easy part of the hard part because it’s the letting go it’s the intentional lack of specific intention. General intention clear. Communication. Connection. Panoramic snapshot of now. Crafted message? Not necessarily. Thematic, for sure. Yield, for example was a very post modern project. I was reveling in the panorama of meanings and connotations contained in this pedestrian symbol, which had a very specific, though judgement deferring directive. Yield (right of way). It was yellow. Not red. It was cautionary. Not alarmist. And then Yield itself. The word taken out of context of the sign had so many rich meanings. Production of energy. Including nuclear energy. A close association with the harvesting of crops and the measuring of that harvest. Obviously, the issue of will, battle of wills, acquiescing, yielding to others, to god, to the government. And then RIGHT. And the Way, which has great philosophical and existential import. Crossing busy street in China while checking smart phone. Not to mention its grounding in the current PARGAMATIC path that I am attempting to lope along(i.e. yield to block). 让 and common confusion of Chinese students between Let and …. A path where I find work that supports my life with my family and affords me the wherewithal to pursue creative writing pursuits from beyond any self-defeating loops of conflicted failed efforts being blamed from my vocational immaturity. I have found many things that I enjoy doing, but I haven’t figured out how to employ them in a way that affords my family and I work-life balance that more closely represents our value systems (how we value time and money and experience and the general configuration of all of those concerns).

02/20/2021

Embroidery symbol via Alan Watts. Travel Books. David and Alexandra Brown’s wedding and Druid Heights. And the music at their wedding and talking about that musician with Beaux in Nashville during a pandemic. Also, recently picked up a copy of *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (which sounds better than “had delivered to my house for free. I’m a club member…). 42 is the answer to everything. During the fall I took two trips. One was to a mountain. And the other was across a desert. The first journey became known as *The IDES and 8* and the second one, which as yet is still on going, *The Journey of Elijah*. Perhaps being so fixed. Stiller in many ways than perhaps ever, I am longing out and out more. I’ve put myself in such a fit of writing. Ideas have ideas and I don’t always know if I should just hack away at a project, or notate the bejesus out of everything do that I can someday maybe find my way back in.6.

92+

I wish I felt more comfortable. There must have been something good about that guy. I couldn’t figure it out though. Not at first at least.

The IDES and the IDES

The U-Haul truck and moving on.

My Achillies Heel and drinking. Family is a trigger. Socializing is a huge trigger.

Can I socialize without alcohol. Odsibian Sotne Block, magic eight ball, his friends bna’s album. Getting new ideas as he shakes it. I just realized that I have to sober up all the way to get to the source. Shit. That is the desert. That doesn’t mean quits, just means reigning in your substances and sweating out the jitterbugs. Think of the reward on the oter side of a really deep, deep up. Keep stretching. Focus on the new. Focus on the real. Heal. Love. Be kind. Stop this blindness. You dictate the thrythms. Np”? The ides and eight. The gifts of the ides. The journey of Elijah. The on going journey. The evolving process. The 100s of pages littering the way. The projgress swith coding. The progress with finig a ay to take care of my boby and do this type of standing or sitting typing work. Finding my rhythm, finding my stride.

2/25/2021

You are a father now. A husband. Pictures of Alice sleeping near, calm, angelic, contented, warm, changed, feed, heathy, your sense of purpose complete. Keep the baby safe, keep the baby loved, keep the baby close.

Meeting our immediately physical needs takes on a much deeper, more emotional, textured, unmitigated directness. Clothing yourself- tears at the wrong boots. But you said they were too small. Oh, you were lying about that so we would take the train and you wouldn’t have to walk now. Now you want to walk and wear the same boots that are suddenly not too small at all. But you lied, so we introduce the replacement boots. Hand-me-downs from your cousin, but you don’t want to wear those, you want to wear YOUR boots, and what is she saying that one lie and your FOREVER boots are just tossed into the donate bag. And snow pants and layers and kids running away to corners to hide and fighting with thumbs in mittens for hands that can’t quite separate on finger from the others on command and so heads outside with a limp flipper of an appendage, her thumb floating somewhere beneath the pink polar fleece material with her other undulating digits. Into the cold, to stand, or sit, or fall in the snow and cry, or beg to be tossed into a snowbank you almost disappear into. Kids love to be scooped up and tossed and hugged. Betsy and I hug in the morning after Esme logs on to Kindergarten and Helena is sitting at the table in her blue unicorn pajamas munching on a “breakfast cookie” (oats, quinoa… banana…peanut butter… chocolate… brown sugar. I look over betsy’s shoulder and Helena has put her cookie down and has her hands upraised. She wants in on the morning lovefest. What a delight to have a toddler call to you from the other side of the room because she wants in on a hug with you and your wife. What a cozy, wholesome, transcendent, mundane morning scene. I am so blessed, I am so blessed.

Justin Bjork has been on my mind the last few days. I have cried twice. My weird circulation issue in my legs, my tense and acid worn tongue, the white bacteria bloom on my tongue probably from too much acidic coffee, beer, Marie Sharpe’s Smokin’ hot sauce. A bruise appeared on my throat yesterday, right above my trachea. It doesn’t hurt at all but it is pretty disconcerting. I believe that it is from Esme holding and swinging around my neck, but regardless, I will be happy to see it resolve itself. Over the fall I have dealt with self-diagnosed costochontritis which may not have ben a 100% accurate diagnosis, but following through on my Musculo-skeletal self-therapy, my rid cage feels much improved and the determination I felt last May as I tried to realign my deeply broken body— something to do with going from a very active working rhythm to an extremely sedentary one and then over extending my left knew when Esme hopped up on my lap while I was studying. May was an intensive stretching period. Getting up early, stretching for hours, sitting in these passive, leg propped up configurations to allow my body to settle back into its normal shape. Then I spent June doing push ups and making sure that my neck and shoulders were as tight and tension laden as possible. Then I blew my achilles heal and had to really take a break from running. That was six months ago. My attitude towards running has shifted, and I don’t even want to plant a flag down and say— fuck it, I am done with running, but I think my perspective has changed. In some ways I was seeking to find ways for the writing to searve my running. Or for my writing, my working, my living to be fueled by running. Where did I get that from? It is not a bdb approach honestly. Something to structure your day around. A guiding habit/ principle grounded in health and performance and goal setting.

The commitment of running, the hours on the road, the preparation, the cool down, the showering, at least the way I do it can easily begin to creep in and overtake my whole day. The worst is the run that dove tails into like 5 unshowered hours afterward because one things leads to another. Your boundaries of your workout world get hazy and loose and ragged and begin to tread on time for other things. I suppose in the end it is a simple act of PRIORITIZING and dealing with the fallout FOMO when certain priorities TRUMP other priorities. I think the more and more difficult and painful and conflicted these decisions are, the closer you are to making a good one. The rose bush metaphor comes to mind. Prune the budding buds back to send more resources to the top contenders… top contenders of what? Beauty? Financial security?

I dove into the luxury retail industry because I saw an opportunity to get into a job that would allow betsy not to work while at the same time having a venue to use and improve my Chinese skills. I knew I had to commit to something. So I did and I got rejected. And I tried again and I got rejected and then I tried again and I got hired at $12 an hour as maybe a cashier or maybe not a cashier depending on who you talked to in the elaborate managerial cadre of the 6 storey (including the basement) behemoth of a Burberry store where I was hired on.

After a few months I had a few additional requirements. I wanted all the merchandise locked up, I didn’t want anything else to fold, and I wanted to be making the commission. My quarter at Burberry was enough of a resume builder to start applying for sales jobs again. Just enough of a resume boost “BURBERRY” to get me past any wary regional manager worried of sticking his or her neck out for an ESL teacher. A “BURBERRY” man, well that is another story! Sidenote— according to my former Korean ESL students a “BURBERRY” man in Korea is a dirty old pervert of stalks around Seoul in a trench coat flashing people.

Getting this job and forging this career and moving millions of dollars of merchandise was good for me. I think it gave me an objective, non-intellectual, challenging, taxing, grinding job that I could WORK and learn the value of work and the long game brutality of work. The VIOLENCE of work. The separation. The alienation. The obsession. The inescapable politics and bickering. The passive-aggressiveness. The micro-aggressions from co-workers and clients. The human sponge aspect of the job where it is your role to absort the angst and frustration and displeasure of you client. Guiding them patiently, soothingly, inspiringly, intimately towards to culmination of way-overpaying for a timekeeping device. But they can afford it. How do you celebrate this abundance? You mirror. You get a sense of their values and interests and enthusiasms and you mirror the shit out of it. And if you are really good at it your don’t come off as a money-grubbing sychophant, whiling away the golden mid-career years of his fleeting youth by caressing the egos, a fluffer for celebrations and accomplishments. For what is a way-over priced timepiece than an intricately constructed symbol. I still really don’t give a shit about watches. Though I will say I can appreciate what intricately constructed symbols they are and the brands that they represent.

I will definitely say that I enjoyed representing OMEGA and ROLEX. Brand representation for products that you believe in in their respective market is a pleasure. It was the backbone of all of my client interactions and that solid tent post to keep the interaction clear and positive and SYMBOL focused. The brand and the product that the brand exemplified was the interface for these interactions. I love a clear interface. I love knowing what my role is and what my tasks are and objectively being able to go down a list to check that I am proceeding correctly and having a mental mapl of what went wrong or what was missed on the other side of the interaction. I got very comfortable with the whole arch of the job I began to get a good sense of what was a waste of time and what was an important investment of time.

I found my bliss 4 years ago in February 2016. It was the culmination of almost 4 years of selling. The slow development had more to do with limited access to technology and a fragmented base of time to develop something, but after 5 years I came up with an AGILE, USEFUL, SIMPIFYING, ABSTRACTING, BUSINESS DEVELOPING, and DRIVING tool. The idea of which was not the innovation, but rather the workflow and deployment of it. It allowed me to completely move away from the unwieldy stack of client cards that my colleagues lugged around, making the sales process feel like some 10,000 piece puzzle that was never ending and also missing pieces. Instead, I embraced OUTLOOK and “hacked” it to use sit in a very specific way that met my sales needs and goals. I was seeing the technology, not as some laboriously distracting learning curve, but instead as a digital solution to eradicate many of the gnawing inefficiencies of the sales process. This process led to steady sales increases, more moment to moment wherewithal, more fluid transitions project to project, better note taking and CRM accuracy and completeness. I had a good low-latency TECH solution that I firmly believed would make my job and life better and I was completely COMMITTED to the process. In fact the process really became my job. What I was doing at literally every moment of the day related to the process and my “STACK” of tasks. With my workflow simplied, my sales process refined I went on to have what was up unto that point my best year of sales. Breaking my previous best year by 250% (which part of this was selling a more popular, higher average price point of a timepiece), but in an industry (like all industries) obsessed with growth, this felt like growth and I was growing.

This dovetailed into beging headhunted off LinkedIn by the boutique manger at GRAFF diamonds, one of the premier diamond houses in the world. This move led me even deeper into the world of luxury retail and while, obviously, it was not the ultimate line of work for me, as my first taste of TECH tinkering had planted a seed which started sprouting shoots during my time at GRAFF, specifically in the form of a $9.99 MOOC that I purchased from Udemy— the course put together by a wonderfully staid, but enthusiastic young New Yorker named Boris. My time with Boris became my coding womb of sorts. Him cheery step by step taking the ineffable logic of computing and turning it into a kitchen recipe in which you use something akin to philiosophical thought to create calculators. I had always enjoyed philosophical thought, but had over the years begun to feel that despite its emphasis on clarity and sound thinking, philosophy had a way of somehow making the world more complex and less comprehensible as opposed to some illuminating, enlightening, life-affriming, life opening, heaven parting, soul-grounding. Programming on the other hand, seemed to take similar logic and symbolic language and conceptual complexity, but turn it instead to the solving of super practical, objective issues which either resolve, reach their solution, or throw you a big fat red ERROR message with some jargony explication of where you fucked up, setting you up for a potentially maddening, or potentially transcendent round of debugging, witch-hunting, fact-finder, puzzle solving. An iterative approach to problem solving that I find sits with me rather nicely. I have always really, really tried to learn from my mistakes. And the mistakes of others. The more mistakes. The more data points. Mistakes are super important. There is a reason that Lebron James is one of greatest of all time when it comes to turnovers, missed shots, missed free throws. He is Casey Goodman as a 5th grader flinging the ball repeatedly every time he touches it. Shooting and shooting and shooting in some little shit kid inspired act of skill building arrogance. I am short and chubby, but fuck all you all I am taking the shot, just try and stop me. He continued his rambunctious was and continued to battle in city leagues and regionally elite adult basketball tournaments well into his 30s until his body— knnes, elbow, back made it damn near impossible to keep working his job as a frozen frood truck packer. Managing the unheated depot of giant freezes and truck bay (sometimes freezing completely in a precipitous dive down to the gtravel driveway. He slipped and fell and fucked up his back and didn’t have sick leave and he needed his body now to work, work, body, don’t stop working now, I need you, move those fucking pizzas. Move those fucking quarts of ice cream and corn dogs and all that other frozen shit. Get it in thr truck. Get it out of here around the UP to the good grocers in Nowary and Iron Mountain, Skandia, Marquette, Ishpeming, Negaunee, L’Anse, take the truck across the channel into the Keeweenaw peninsula, right up to the end of US 41 at Ft. Wikins state park among the Estivant pines (Edward Estivant of Paris), which are one of the last old growth white pine stands in Michigan. Weymouth pines in England as Captain George Weymouth brought seeds of the species back to England in 1605. I have never had that kind of confidence. But it is something you kind of need in life about somethings at some point.

But the scenery is back cloth, merely, for lily bearing Angels who fluttered to earth or play violins in lutes at negativities; martyrdoms are inactive in front of it, miracles take place, in Mystic marriages, scenes of torture, crucifixions, funerals and resurrections; Processions when rival armies close in a deadlock of striped lances, in ascetic Gray beard strikes his breast with a stone or writes an electron while a lion slumbers at his feet; a sainted stripling is riddled with crossbow bolts and loved prelate's collapse with upcast eyes and swords embedded across their tonsures now all these transactions strike the eyes with the monopolize ING impact; For five centuries and more, in many thousands of frames, they have been stealing the scene; And when the strange deeds are absent recognition is much slower than it is in the low countries, where the precedence is reversed. (ATofG—Patrick Leigh Fermor- 28)

*Soul Mountain*

*A Time of Gifts*

*A Year Away*

*Hitchhiker’s guide to the Galaxy*

*Journey to the East*

*The Blood Meridan*

*The Future of Nostalgia*

*The Arcade Project*

*Journey to the West*

*Eloquent Javascript*

*The Well-rounded Rubyist*

*Practical Object Oriented Design*

04/26/2021

And what is this exactly? Therapy? Expression? Truth? Searching? Yearning. An extension of and an engagement with the word. An optimistic act. A turn of phrase. The repetiion of practice. The surrender. The Settling. The abuse. The deceit. The hding. The hide away. The shame. The transgression. The patrimony. The multiple perspectives. The weight of narrative. Its falseness. The rambling incantations. And all of this in a good faith act at collection.

It was so good to talk to you! We missed more about Alice and Morgan and D.C. existence and your job and what you guys are eating these day and what you are putting in your ears and how you walk with God is which I say in earnestness at the risk of opening myself up for attacks from my mother for being disingenuous.

Frankly though I did not want to grill you on future plans. That what next question will resolve itself in time I am sure. I don’t know about you, but I prefer head down doing to pining away after some hypothetically more ordered future. You need both certainly. But What I want is a plan, or a ttrajectory and then I would rather not have to talk and talk about it while I am putting the work in to get there. I suppose this is a sort of keeping the middle miles to myself. Working through the work to get from A to B. Figuring out how to work through the work. Learning my Emotinoal BM protocols well and executing them.

Mother always seemed a little overwhelmed with her multiplying mind. I feel like I have something of the same with my rambling amtitions of language— Chinese, Spanish… and what am I doing??? I am DOING language. This was a helpful, flexible insight I overheard recently. Writers DO language. And if you are really DOING the language you may not always be able to justify what you are doing. Do I have to justify my time whacking buckets of ball into the well-lit and net enscribed green dream kingdom of the suburban driving range I frequent.

In some ways I have always expected that thought, good thought, true, well-thought thought had to come out preformed. Sure spontaneous too, in conversation, building on other people’s ideas. Parroting. Shifting. Comparing terms. And so force. But what about all the chafe. The bad ideas. The half thoughts. The 10% taken as 100% which affects all of our thinking to some extent. Vision is a kind of blindness, no? You have such a clear path in mind that all the other avenuse fall away. Your desire to take those other paths disappears. A death of an infinite number of worlds. All those other lives and deaths you will never know, because you made this decision and not that one. You moved here instead of there. Missed that flight. Caught that train. Wrote a letter. Stayed home.

And most of these pathways will never be missed or even noticed, acknowledged, thought upon or even imagined. We block them out by accepting the inevitable now, the inevitable realness of this life as it were, the steadiness of this existence, which is but a collection of disparate and separable parts. We do our very best to stich them together. We build sweeping rhapsodies of narrative and rationalization, we seek a sense of place, family, firmness, purchase, purpose, history, tradition, we forge or have forged for us a complex scheme of relationships and values and customs and commerce and responsibilities, geographical connections and separations, urban and rural divides, time differences, ideological blinders, political baggage, emotional balance or imbalance, health concerns, sleep deprivation, doom scrolling anxiety, overeating, drinking, inactivity, overactivity, distractedness, indecision, exhaustion, hunger, thirst, boredom

All of the projects: writing and coding and video and film and watching films and reading books and traveling and stretching and exercising and meditating and getting enough sleep and drilling down on my diet and overcoming my digital dislocation trhoughb some elaborate retroactive digitizing of my unwieldy paper life,l including the transcripting of 20 years of writing in scattered notebooks, a project that seems to demand some investment of time to both justify the effort that I have already expended (have swum halfway across the ocean, it seems silly to swim back at this pint, but again, where the fuck are we? What are we doing? And even though this is an honest and open expression of how I am feeling it is not mature or responsible or even the whole picture. The general picture is that I have a block of months to focus on trying to And yet that curiosity is made from a quiet, humble, broken, human place. A man’s place before the world. Before his family. This place of pride in the family become a place of shame. But I do not apologize. This is my devil’s bargain. All prophecies shall be self-fulfilling beasts. And I write on to be surprised. I code on to be surprised. I read on to be surprised and remain curious and attempt, perhaps, somehow, someday to find the cresting wave of the word ride the cresting lift of quick existence. A quickening of mind and body and soul. A longing. A reaching. A balancing. A summoning of natural force and order, a harnessing of natural force and order and physics. Anticipating the force, danger, possibility. Surfing the silver linings. As it were.

04/26/2021

So much not explored the conversation goes on and on. I tend to get on a roll after not talking much, feel free to tell me to put a sock in it or abruptly change the topic if there is something more pressing than the randomn line I may have wandered down

* + A playlist of music, I have several accruing playlists: Code 2020, Happy Afternoon, Mellooooo, a dance list… cause you know when you suddenly want to dance and you can’t think of a song.

Coding journey has been somewhat Quitotic. Trying to understand and apply Agile mindset. Now I am creating an Agile Task Management/task tracker.

Finally getting my Address book action/intention and or touch point tracker and or action/intention tracker/recorder. And having this grow organically out of the time clock, out of all the sprawling spawning journal projects. Breaking down the issue. Identifying needs. Knowledge gaps. Learning opportunities. Assessing costs (learning, time, drag on other processes)

Am I making a mistake? Tell me I’m making a mistake.

**Alsatian Darn**

Only feel a chill whenever I come out of my shell  
Only feel a chill whenever I come out of my shell  
I'd surely lie if I said that I was sure that it might  
Work out  
  
[Chorus]  
Now, I won't let it slide  
No, I won't let it slip up  
No, I won't let it slide  
No, I won't let it slip up  
No I won't  
  
[Bridge 1]  
Found a way and I feel like I shouldn't let go  
Drop a bomb on the spots where my doubt streams grow  
What to do when the things that I want don't allow  
For the handful of mouths that I'm trying to feed  
  
[Bridge 2]  
Got to do what you've got to do  
What you've got to do (x2)  
  
What weighs on my mind  
So I can't get sleep at night  
  
[Bridge 3]  
Say, can I make a bad mistake?  
Say what it is I want to say to you  
Say what?  
  
Can I make a bad mistake  
Say what it is I want to say to you  
Say what?  
(x5)

Sabotage by the Beastie Boys on a Tuesday afternoon… Your Crystal Ball ain’t so crystal clear…

Shut me down with the push of you button.

06/01/2021

My responsibility has found a place.

06/15/2021

Still thinking about that idea to do a “Writer’s Workshop” with Caleb, to promote writing as a way to connect as a family, deepen our understanding of ourselves and the world, and ensure that our literacy—both passive and active continue to develop as we age and grow and find ourselves learning increasingly complex subjects.

07/06/2021

**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.

08/21/2021

Appreciating the job that he and Morgan are doing with Alice. She is obviously a very loved little girl. Golfing was a good time and set a nice precedent for the future. Ben and Adam would likely fit well into the fold. Dad and Hans would give us two foursomes.

Kayaking, hanging out on the porch, didn’t get a jog in, but so it goes.

Marquette was great. Sugarloaf. Definitely could have gone for an overnight there.

I am sorry I brought up Mom’s ridiculous comment about Genevieve being simple and the insensitivity of it and the sort of inappropriateness of it.

Her way of speaking “honestly” but unnecessarily. Losing herself in her thinking about loud revelry. Thinking out loud about Nick. Basically trying to get at how can we as uncles help him to be a bit more likeable. Same thing with Hans really. How can we help Hans be more likeable.

Did mom remember Dr. Beaver? He had the big beard I mentioned. Dad picking up sticks. He has to do it because Dolores isn’t around any more. Dolores park. That feeling of freedom and acceptance and transcendence. Trying to find that dream in the world. Trying to maintain that balance of creation and future openness and engagement while at the same time being able to manage everything that has gone on before.

The land of Taquamenon is something to be seen.

Imagine yourself a warrior

Or a Jesuit voyageur

Trying to buy what can’t be sold

Trying to buy what can’t be sold.

The locusts buzz was the most incessant sound. The most all encompassing were the blue angels, shredding the blue sky and billowy cloud peacefulness of the day like crock pot chicken just before presentation in the oversided aluminum foil

04/07/2021

Thank you, Caleb, I have very much enjoyed reading *A Time of Gifts* this year has been a challenging one and very static. The kinesis of Fermor’s prose and peregrinations was wonderful to lope through winter into spring with. My reading-- so sparse and unsubstantial these last few years has found new life and acquisitional fervor. “Gifts” was read unevenly through Susan Sontag Essays, Josephy Brodsky poems and essays, A book I keep coming back to by Svetlana Boym called *The Future of Nosalgia*, W.G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn*, Herman Hesse’s *Journey to the East* and *Siddhartha*, *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* along with some “palm of the hand” style super short stories by Lydia Davis. This literacy plung has been something of a ballast against the deluge of web development language I have inundated myself with over the course of this year.

Breathing well and aware, well-hydrated and rested/refreshed, stretched and grounded, active and engaged

Wedding August 2019 (wedding invitation)

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

A picture containing diagram

Description automatically generated

Married: 17 August 2019

Email:

**From:** Caleb Whitmer <cwhitmer92@gmail.com>   
**Sent:** Thursday, April 9, 2020 7:11 PM  
**To:** adwhitmer@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Re: Gimme Shelter...

Brother,

Greetings from Rock Hill, SC! After some deliberation, we decided to make the drive to spend my Thurs-Mon Easter vacation with Morgan’s family. Thankfully, no military blockades stopped us. Fingers crossed no interstate travel bans go into effect between now and Easter Tues.

We are doing well, both of us healthy and on the whole spending our more or less quarantined existence pleasantly. I am still going into work as educational institutions, like liquor stores, are considered essential. My work has suddenly evolved into a television studio and we are broadcasting lectures three-four nights a week for a live audiences of about a thousand people. Morgan just completed her Master’s comprehensive exams on Tues. Assuming she passes, she has only a few more essays to go for the degree.

I am trying to spend the time productively. I’ve been playing piano and redabbling in French. I am reading the Brothers Karamazov (long on my reading list) and listening to a 50 hour (!) biography of Churchill on my runs around DC and walks to and from work. I’ve just finished running here in SC and WC, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, has just pissed off John Maynard Keynes by switching England back to the gold standard. Not sure how this ends yet, but there has been some foreshadowing that this doesn’t go very well for WC.

Good on the brewery for curbside pickup! And we’ve actually done the same thing with pancake batter. Morgan has started baking sourdough bread. My understanding is that sourdough starters require some training and a good deal of that training for us has been eating sourdough pancakes (which has necessitated further training in the long battle against the so-called “Covid-15”).

How else are you all fairing? Are you still subscribing to the New Yorker? I think their coverage of New York during the pandemic has been really good. Little vignettes of a city in crisis. Any vignettes from Chicago?

Best wishes,

Caleb

23APRIL2020:

弟弟,\*

So glad to hear you two are living well through this season of shelter! Clear headed, in good health, and having

the financial wherewithal to weather this storm really puts a body in the position to get a little taste of the retired life.

I am looking forward to being retired someday. If this preview is any indication, I think betsy and I will do well at it. Though hopefully by then we will not have any small children under our constant care.

Good to hear that you’re getting some good reading in! Both visually and aurally! *The Brothers Karamazov* has been on my reading list forever as well. Remember reading the “Grand Inquisitor” chapter way back. Hope you are enjoying it. Something of that ilk maybe a little more ambitious than I can take on at the moment; I may have to save the Russian novels for the next pandemic.

My guerilla reading style of the past decade has seemingly striped me of the ability for “silent sustained reading”. I like to think that the children deserve most of the blame for this. You see they have this notion that their welfare and companionship should trump my ability to hold a sustained thought or finish even a thin chapter of a mass market paperback. They are very self-centered and helpless which is not a great combination in a roommate or roommates. Despite their machinations though, I actually just finished “The Last Wish” by Andrzej Sapkowski from his *Witcher* series. Despite some pretty cringey writing, it was a fun read! Some of the joy was akin to watching a B-movie where the good parts are good because they are so good and the bad parts are also kind of fantastic because they are just so, so bad.

I’m also just about through a slim paperback of “The Castle of Crossed Destinies” by the Italian writer Italo Calvino. Back in college I read his “If on a winter’s night a traveler” which I really liked. Calvino has been called an Italian Fabulist and he gets pretty funky with form. “If on a winter’s night…” switches back and forth alternating chapters between second person narration and a chapter of a new, totally different book (different genres etc…) even as your “second person narration self” furtive searches for the original book that he started way back in chapter one. His “Castle of Crossed Destines” is about a bunch of people who find themselves inexplicably in a castle in the middle of a forest without the ability to speak. Luckily, there is wine and a deck of Tarot cards (or as the Italians say Tarocchi) and the visitors to the Castle are then able to sort of mystically depict their Chaucer-like tales using only the images on the cards and some unexplained mind-melding.

I wondered the other day if you dip back into French from time to time. I have a book of poems by Rimbaud that is in French and English. Whenever I read a poem out of it I always try to read the French as well, which is hilarious and hackneyed, but I try to just go for it. You know, feel it, let *Spiritus Mundi* conjure up something of what Rimbaud had in his mind. Language is so wonderful, but also such a slog …or not a slog, but just a potentially bottomless abyss of time spent. My continued mission towards educated adult-like Mandarin literacy continues to forge ahead… with peaks… with plateaus…with the occasional valley slog. I have a copy of one of the most famous Kung-fu series by the most famous Kung-fu novelist Jin Yong (“The Legend of the Condor Heroes” 射雕英雄传). I have had this book in my possession for over two years and have been wanting to read it for like ten. The reading level is still a bit of a reach for me, but just this week I had a really nice reading session where it felt like my comprehension took another lurch forward. I got some of the jokes! It’s such a strange spiraling process, but one that I am (mostly) grateful for.

On the Chinese topic, two films: “Ash is Purist White” and “The Farewell”. “Ash is Purist White” is a film by Jia Zhangke, who generally makes really interesting, well-shot, simmering, slowly unfolding films. His main actor is always his wife and his films are always very humane. His films typically end up being banned in mainland China because he’s into realism a little too deep (the CCCP doesn’t always like that). “The Farewell” stars Awkwafina and is a little more heartwarming than “Ash” and was another good perspective on the contemporary Chinese scene. It may or may not have been banned on the mainland…

6:30 a.m. I am up. I am awake. I am ready to read or do some writing. I’m settling in. I have coffee. And then…what…no… Helena is awake… (sigh) she never wakes up this early.

6:45 a.m. Helena is in her highchair next to me at the table. She offers me a Crispy Oat\* and then rescinds the offer and eats it herself and then claps for herself. I am not reading or writing, but instead sipping my coffee and basking in the gummy, slightly mischievous smile of my one-year-old. There are great clouds this morning: stretched out and minced up with a lower, mountainous base glowing violet in the rising sun. The brown brick across the alley is waking up. Its reddish hue brightening with each tick forward of the sun. Helena waves to the clouds and chirps her breathy “Hi.” She is a hummer and a singer and an engaged, communicative girl all without saying much more than “Hi”. She is a full-on walker now and just seeing her cowboy saunter into a room warms me up and makes me laugh. Her manic baby zeal is contagious.

Esme’s manic 5-year-old zeal has been a bit grating of late. She is wired to be as active and engaged as possible, which is setting her up to be a good learner and engager with life, but has become, not infrequently exhausting. Through our time together this last month we have definitely gotten closer and more annoyed with each other which may just be a symptom of how close we are. She is still (mostly) a really delightful kid though. Interested in being read to at any hour of the day. Loving the films we pop out of the archives for her- Disney’s “Robin Hood”, “Mary Poppins”, “Totoro”. She plays well in the back yard and rules the garden with her adventures and projects and games. She’s definitely missing other kids though!

Sorry about the slow reply! I had a bit of a rough week balancing out my various responsibilities and projects. I think I am at some kind of a tipping point now though as I try to prioritize and screw down on what I’d most like to - during my Covid Sabbatical. I am still technically still working, but just reporting the hours that I work as we work them at home. There are things to be done, but the story being closed and the uncertainty about when it will reopen makes things tricky. And all-in-all I have decided that I am not a big fan of the work from rhythm and/or just have not figured it out/negotiated it out just yet. betsy and I did just sketch up a weekly schedule this morning where we have identified blocks of “office time” for me which should be really helpful for getting some focused work done!

Much Love,

Aaron

\*“little brother” di4di4

\* Aldi Brand Cherrios

06/02/2020-

Wish I had the day off the top of my head, but definitely worth including here is that last month Caleb broke the news that Morgan is expecting! They are in DC weathering out the pandemic and the social unrest… Morgan just finished up her master’s in political theory and Caleb is working for the Dominican Brotherhood.

05AUGUST2019

Sent a postcard with that iconic image of the French guy jumping off the building.

It is from 1960, but looks like it could be from 1930. I also wrote a punny little message about advice and adding vice and offering the folksy wisdom of just being good to one another.

02AUGUST2019-

Did you realize that Morgan and Madine are closer in age than you and I- 9 years vs. 13… I’m not saying that Morgan is a child bride, just that she is your bride and she is very young. And it is possibly illegal what you are about to do, or at least frowned upon in some cultures. And yes, good morning, it’s morning and I have jokes.

Current

**3/24/2022 -- letter**

**Dear Caleb, Morgan and Alice,**

**Happy belated birthday morning. Your birthday is a harbinger of spring. And I am graeful for it. While all in all we have little to complain aobout weather wise I am happy to see the snow go and I was pleased by how short-lived the last(perhaps last) dying thorws of the winter were this past week when it snowed steady over a night after having wamered up and melted all the February snow away. The March snow feel all night and all through the morning and onces again North Center was a white enrobed world. But her gown must have been Rent-the-run way because just as soon as she appeared, she was off again and back to her plain spruing rutty browns and earthy dones, grey twig pigements and dappled brick facades, cars up and down the street in silver whie and black.**

**Congratulations on anticipating number two! This is a miracle. This is a project. This is significant. This is the essence of life itself. Your collective panance in transitioning from married without children to married and parents is impressive. Your dedication to each other and alice is palpable and beautiful. You seem to have rolled many of the sacrifices of parenthood right into your lifestyle. This is great! This is good living!**

**Breakdowns, curveballs, out-of-the-blues**

**Looking for that firmly packed path forward… or you pack the earth yourself and you make your way step by step.**

**Query Caleb about the abstraction of what makes a successful Chapter to a mystery novel. Boil it down to its most essential components.**

**Test Driven Writing. Modular. Intentional. Scaffolded in order to solve a problem, level a perspective, achieve a certain tone. Because tone is kind of IT isn’t it. Meaning and the relevance of what we say will pass away, but there is something in the tone we impart. The bell we ring. We fullness or minimalism from which we attempt to articulate with. We are moved to express. We whittle down from the abundance of refuse we have refused to let go of.**

**You decide what kind of writing you want to do and then you have this system of tests… that are really not tests though-- they are expectations. They become tests when you run them against your actual writing. You begin your writing process with a bunch of broken expectations.**

**The pain of child birth. The pain of being a woman. Humanixing the decision to do certain things with your body. Invetro fertilization.**

**So you scaffold out your tests/expectations for your different Classes of writing-- the classes are molds / types , even if you are going to do something innovative, you have to scaffold it out with familiar things.**

**Bistro Cacao -- Caleb is a big fan of French cuisine.**

**Abstracting creates clarity.**

**connections**

* [Primacy of the Good](file:///C:\Users\aaron\Creating\Writing\Pieces\Family\Whitmer\Family%20Documents\Primacy%20of%20the%20Common%20Good%20Paper_.docx)