[HUB-- be a better partner](C:\\Users\\aaron\\Creating\\Writing\\Pieces\\Family\\betsy\\betsy.docx)

[Health](file:///C:\Users\aaron\Creating\Writing\Pieces\Family\betsy\betsys_back.docx)

**I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!!!**

**03/13/2022**

At dinner last night you gave an impromptu introduction to PI and calculating cirumerfenc of a circle. You pla math games and vocabulary games and geography games with the girls.You make it fun and engaging.

You do holiday projects with the girls. Chinese lanterns strung from wire across the kitchen, Dumplings steaming in the bamboo layered racks. Snow flakes at Christmas, the branch that came in from the alley and remained, to dangle seasonal appropriate baubles and decoratioons. Mr. Pumpkinhead at holloweeeb and tissue ghotst floating down the stairwell, and a black cat on the back door made of construction paper with a crooked tail and sketical yellow eyes

**02/27/2022**

Your back has been feeling consistently pretty solid of late. Dr. Molly got her back on track and now she is working with a Pilates instructor to build strength and stay injury free. This is really fantastic. Your diligence with stretching is really inspiring to me and also looks really good. Sure posture. Toned. Lovely.

Miscarriage, abortion, relationship, sex, stress, roles, , my collapse, struggling to keep inching forward in my spiral of concerns, the procedure,

10/24/2021

The party went off well and betsy shined as she always does when pulling that sort of thing together. I’ve been shattered these last few years as far as birthdays and holidays go and have been so grateful for her wherewithal to plan and organize and celebrate these important passings.

08/12/2021

Why don’t you take her down to the yard she says. I am silent. I know you, you’re not getting that much done. How does she mean this? Is this a sympathetic- I know you are not getting much done because you have not had a lot of time to day because you took Helena for such a large chunk of time in the morning, and have been a bit distracted by the close quarters of working in our relatively small and cloister air-conditioned environs.

What was that writing burst all about? I honestly, right in this moment do not exactly know. I will credit it to a certain extent with a certain excess of weed consumption, but the timing of it and the full evolution of it I canoot exactly explain and you seemed ashamed of the whole thing. You couldn’t approach it nourishly as a draft. As a drafting process. You called it something that crazy Mikey would write and then likened it to my old friend Lee Sanford’s deluded muddled white guy manifesto which was all ego and little direction and super poorly edited at that.

Why do I continue t4o feel creatively stifled by you. Why do I feel like I have had to go under ground with my creative process and I cannot include you because you will judge and be harsh… but looked at another way, you have been incredibly important and patient and pushed back against the wilder parts of the piece and did help me to draft it in to a much better form.

07/14/2021

It is our anniversary. Betsy is having a rough day. Felt good outside on a morning walk, but came home and tweaked her back and is now feeling low and defeated. Low energy. Inviting sympathy and care. Emotional lowness to harmonize her dark cloud. Her physical pain, her disappointment, her embarrassment at not being able to fully cope with this. She has a virtual therapy session at noon. I need to break from working to take the girls out. I am in a pretty deep flow right now and am resenting this. This deep flow and focus that I can get to is a real thing. Even my fingers feel kind of snappier on the keyboard.

I had a good stretch session this morning and was feeling like I am on a new plateau of stretching and not having to think about it—just having it happen

* Flexibility is strength.
* Agility is control. (strength is control… flexibility is control)
* Extension counteracts (acts against) contraction.
* I am a strength gathered in stillness and silence.
* There is only one stretch.
* Diet
  + Fewer calories
    - Especially from sugar, carbs and beverages.
    - “a vegetable eater and water drinker
    - More greens and vegetable.
    - Be general to allow it to be relaxed, yet productive.

06/26/2021

*I am feeing overwhelmed by the challenges of the day so if you could please prepare yourself to not get a full day of work in today and being available to help me that would be good.*  
 This is how madness begins which seems like an aggressive attack on my wife, but it really is not trying to be. It is attempting to state a fact. To see a contradiction. To catch a glimpse of the apparition that is haunting us, has been haunting us. The bug in the code in our emotional and linguistic makeups. She is telling me I need to be sensitive, maybe that is all I nee dot hear here. She is in pain and I need to be sensitive. But after days and days and days of this. The ambiguity. The uncertainty about time and blocks of time. The shattered expectations and fragmented intentions. A years of wildly convoluted working ways. Leading to a productivity of a sort that is difficult to characterize.

I have gone to a strange protean state. An amoral, swashbuckling, acquisitional knowledge hunt. I am the lonely hunter. I am my way in the modern labyrinth of competing visions. There have always been competing visions. What have historically been the interfaces that hold the competing visions together. That knits them into the same universe. A silence that grows beyond them all.

06/08/2021

He reads her the snotgreen passage in Ulysses, or he asks her if he can read it. He wants to read it aloud. And now he is not alone in the room. She has come to sit in the room. Haunting the couch across from him where we sits after having gotten up, gotten his daughter going for the day and begun to work on his writing in the frayed and checked backset white chair. The sides of which were shredded by the cat who developed the habit after his companion Hugo died. That was a whole other thing— finally back in China, in career limbo with less and less wherewithal to shift.

You are sitting and not really looking at me, but you are facing me and I am conscious of you. I got up earlier with the girl and have had coffee and a 5mg THC capsule. The morning is warm close and humid in that fresh June way when the heat takes its time rousing in the morning. Unlike perhaps an August heat that stays up all night and greatest you in the morning feverously, delirious and drained at the break of day, the dog days, these are still the bird and grass days, the get the garden in days.

I offer to read her something and she looks kind of stunned. She speaks slower in the morning and quieter, like she is speaking from a far away place, I’m trying to engage her, this has been going on for over a month, I am desperate, I don’t know what to do, but what happens when that desperation has bubbled up and boiled over and then cools upon you just like your limits on your happiness you find limits to your grief, stop gabs, stiff upper lip, a little high, a little low—how do we keep functioning, how can we live in these contradictions, how the fuck does it makes sense any of it when we start breaking it all done and we start to line up our messages and behaviors and try to untangle and maintain our relationships in a landscape that is ever expanding geographically and digitally as our resources dwindle or we contort ourselves into strange positions mental and physical to make our personal political-economy cohesive, sustainable. It will kill us whatever it is, but we can mitigate pain, we can try and mitigate suffering… though should we… don’t we want our JEWELS to SHINE for all eternity. My jewel was forged with dragon glass and it is darkness itself, consuming all light that draws near, necessary disappearing into the depths and folds and facets because where else do we exist—what is the baseline to be? What is the basis for your next mood? What do you do with broken relationships, fragmented ones, political umbrage, religious intolerance, racism, addiction (to drugs and alcohol sure, but all the million other HABITS with their varying degrees of salubriousness and salacity. Deadening habits of consumption hang our unhealthy minds on our dry bones for all the world to behold our cravenness. Deadening habits. Streamlining for efficiency. Coffee up. Alcohol down. Up the stairs and down. Go, go, go…

So many stairs—3 story businesses, third story apartments- up to the “el” platfom, down

06/07/2021

She lays on the floor stretching. Honey, she asks weakly, can you perhaps make me a piece of toast. She is weak and nauseous and not eating well.

I am abandoned without anyone to reach out to. I certified my unemployment today. I pecked away at some writing. Still swirling my relationship with my mother around and around. I’ll work my metaphors until there is some meat on their bones.

06/06/2021

Betsy and I biking on the Tibetan Plateau and walking across a field of tundra grass where we found dry yak bones and betsy passed out from dehydration and the altitude. We made it up to the temple and a monk in one of the side buildings offered us bowls of a greasy stew. In another room a month who is chanting beckons for us to come closer and he ties a red thread to our wrists. We make a pack not to cut the thread off and to just let it fall off when it falls off.

The red thread sees Alex back to Portland and betsy and I on to Songpan for a very tame, though still kind of arduous horse treks way up into the mountains in northern Sichuan. Cannabis was growing along the rode. There were honest to god Tibetan cowboys and cracker jack campfire cooks who whipped up bread and soup, always making sure we have a fresh pair of chopsticks whiddeled from sticks found near by. We made it up the mountain and back down and slept two nights in a tent in the mountain cold and ate with an appetite at every meal and when we came back to the town and before we got on a bus, which would prove one of our more harrowing journeys, we ate a big meal, arranged to have our laundry down and then crashed out early in our clean, simple room.

When we awoke we took a bus that meander through the mountains, getting stopped multiple times by mud slides that came down from the sloping or sheer cliffs adjacent to the road we meandered on. The bus would then pull over and wait for the nearest back-hoe or bobcat could hustle over. Once the machine arrived and laboriously removed the sludge and mud and rock payload by payload we would get back on out way. After forever we arrived in Jiangyou. After setting up night train tickets to Xi’an—a leg of the trip we were really looking forward to as it was a return to familiar territory. A good place to reintegrate back into urban Chinese life before jumping full on back into life back in Beijing. In Jiangyou we sat by the river where there were tables and chairs set up and tents to block the sun and their were men going around doing some kind of ear treatment on patrons with long metal implements and sometimes flame. A couple of chatty men attached themselves to us and we ended up spending several hours together, drinking lots of tea, smoking lots of cigarettes and then before we rushed off to hope on our night train to Xi’an we all had noodles snagged from a restaurant by one of the men. They were very nice and even thought they gave us shit about beating our asses in the Korean War, and they were kind of braggy about how much money they were making and the new house that they were building, but I couldn’t blame them. They were my wealth. I was traveling. I was on vacation. I was storing up memories.

Very seriousness now. Concentrating:

“Have… you… tried… the fish.” And then once again much more confident and decisive. It was back now and he had obviously said this sentence many times in the past.

“Have you tried the fish?” This time motioning with his right hand to present the imaginary fish. And his pronunciation is pretty solid, pretty clear. Though the ‘i’ in ‘fish’ elongates to an ‘’ee’’ and the “sh” is kind of swallowed in a too early taper that makes it sound like a flash of static, crackling and unsure. I wonder if he could learn to hang those “sh” sounds out a little longer, a little looser, let them taper just a little slower, the hush of the waves, Malibu sunset soothingly in view, hush, hush, hush…

“Have you tried the fish?”

In Xi’an we had more random kindness in the form of a mini-van ride back across town to our hotel room from the Indian Restaurant near the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. We had a lovely dinner and walked out into a monsoon. After waiting at a bus stop for some time and trying to flag down a taxi (regular or irregular), a guy in a mini-van stopped and offered us a ride. He turned out to be very nice. Things got a little awkward the next day when he showed up at our hotel offering to take us out to dinner. This was incredibly sweet, but we begged off as it was our last night before heading back to Beijing and we were transitioning out of road mode. We needed time together, just the two of us.

We have had a lot of time together just the two of use, pre-kids and I am very grateful for that. **Chicago, Germany, Xi’an, Grand Marais, Guatemala, Chicago (got married), Beijing, Chicago**

05/24/2021

I try to get her to pay attetniont to Helena’s Owl dance which is adorable, she is hooting and twirling in a light summer shirt with the gossomar bedroom curtain puffed up by the box fan in the windo behind it. She does not have the wherewithal to really acknowledge the dance. She is low energy and pads in the hall. Can I do something for you. *I don’t know.* You want to get outside for a little bit, get into the sun? *Yes, maybe* she says slowly with no energy, no enthusiasm. All of the inertia she feels tring to get the girls going is reflected in her voice. She has been bled dry.

And I am left with what..

1. Break and give in to the powers of entropy ripping at our life right now.
2. Keep my head down and keep trying to transcend my current situation
   1. Find artistic self-actualiztion
   2. Secure the requisite skills to launch my tech career.
3. Seek outside help
   1. Subject wife to our welfare insurance
   2. Subject wife to the homespun politico-psychological-theological-pop-culture-latest thing I just read therapy hacks of my mother
   3. Women’s health clinic?

It is truly frightening. I have always looked to you for a sound opinion. A sounding board to settle my vision with.

I ask her if she wants to go down to the yard with the girls, she mumbles something about how it would be nice to get a break from them, but it would also be nice to sit outside for a while. My wife seems so weak in this moment, so defeated and hopeless. Completely detached from our plight as modern day homesteaders. Our ambiguous harvest ahead. Our ambiguous goals ahead. She is walking up feeling terrible. Hopeless. Physically sick to her stomach and completely zapped of energy. She is like a wraith of fragility and psychic tension. Shades and shadows thrown from my year at Valparaiso when I would, be confronted at the moment of my ultra focused come down with my wife lonely, needy, wanting attention and affirmation and wanting me to be fun and relaxed and spontaneous and me feeling overwhelmed by all my deadlines next weekend and the following and the larger horror or what lies beyond this year of study. All there is for me to do is work. All there is for me to do is produce. But how do I keep the wherewithal to stay connected with you when we seem to have such a radically different internalized conception of the mission?

Your black cloud is a wraith of energy and enthusiasm sucking.

My success and exploration and journeying and processing is bringing me further and further away from you. Because you are where? And am I leaving you, or are you staying behind. And I am leaving you to try and develop skills so that I have the wherewithal to financially support you and our family while at the same achieving some semblance of self-actaulization and self-setting, finally at last feeling launched on a more definable vocation, with a better work life balance, finding a frame of mind to finally and fully accept and apply my identity as a writer.

05/22/2021

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

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

05/15/2021

She’s ruining my psyche.

What’s wrong with, Helena.

I don’t know, she just yells at me all the time.

05/13/2021

Your left foot is acting up, the one you hurt when you jumped down from that fence when I was in China. That one little move and then pain and limitation for the rest of your life. It could have been worse. It could have been better.

You back is causing you pain. Making it hard to stand for any length of time. You are despairing about the present and despairing more about the future. All of those joyful kid facilitating tasks suddenly cast in a cruel light of impatience and discomfort and distraction like when you went to Tim’s gallery show and his memory seemed shot and he seemed so much older and slowing and he was still showing the same beautifully detailed paintings of his vegetative daughter and who he and his wife had cared for all of these years and how their story was beautiful and tragic and something to be cherished, pitied, prayer upon. It was hard to not feel patronizing towards them.

Feel saddened by their hard time and their having a child and not having a child. Having a child that will only take, that cannot give back. And they I thought about what the fuck I had been giving back to my mother. She may have preferred me as a theme. As a mascot. An embodiment of the culture and values of your institution. The kids are not the mascot. The kids are the institution. The question her is what did they miss out on. Obviously they missed out on all the many developmental steps, but what does that amount to, what is the value there. How would you characterize that? That deeper bond of connecting with another autonomous being. The delight of getting through all the potentially harmony busting factors to simple have some peace and enjoyment together— whether it is a meal or a game or simply a shared conversation.

4/4/2021

Betsy’s incredible tutoring skills (great examples, knack, ESL, language tutoring

* Nurturing
* Systems
* Effort enthusiasm

04/09/2021

Yes! The Yes of renewal-- ecstatic yes!

Emboldened by love yes! Yes ascending.

The yes of return

The yes everlasting

The yes I promised to you truly

And have been attempting to conceive of ever since.

04/02/2021

And then the loops through coffee and weed and alcohol and sleep, sometimes early on the couch, nose straight up at the ceiling, book or magazine splayed on his chest.

He opens his eyes. You going to bed she says as she changes from on pair of black pants into another. He blinks— yes. And then he gets up and brushes his teeth— mentally measuring his eye bags— takes note of their hue, their shade. He’s tired. He’s been asleep. Should drink some water. He drinks a mason jar full of water and urinates and then goes to bed.

She’s stretching on the back roller watching a bake off. Did he say goodnight or did he just walk through. I probably waved he thinks. I waved and she was just watching her show and didn’t see me wave he rationalizes. A wave can be really intimate—especially if you catch someone’s eye with it. But she’s wrapped up in the pastry drama and her own self-defeating loops starting at her 40+ years and ending at her hating feeling 70.

I am drunk and stoned and 42 and have been out of a job for two months now— my days are an intentional haze and my evening are a blurring and chemical curtain drawn around the day.

The writing can be uneven—

I think that is the point of a first draft— you let the good energetic writing and the salient ideas and connection design the narrative structure. I don’t know how to tell a story exactly— so I gather my material and get to know it and sort it and distill it and allow the material to suggest some sort of form or flow or structure. This is basically McPhee— which I need to read again— I find the idea exhilarating—completely liberating.

I have been away—I have left you alone to lead on many things and I think you feel lonely—at least that’s part of it, isn’t it?

O4/01/2021

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

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

Effort could yield that good current, that good flow.

03/31/2021

Sitting in a Meijer parking lot sobbing.

Has never been depressed this long of a time period.

Mental wherewithal eroded by physical pain.

Depression—pretending

Despairing.

Needy wife—depressed wife

Betsy is a great mom—the girls are thriving

Dad’s trying to be clever and learn web development and finally become a writer. Settle into the life that he has always wanted. Organized. Literary identity just *there* accessible. Near.

But the fact of the matter is that mother and father are both having massive mid-life crisis—she’s feeling physically depleted, he feels pressed up with increasing discomfort against the forces of time and space and age—welcome to adulthood the wiseass sparrow tweets.

03/30/2021

I feel estranged from you and don’t have the wherewithal to work my way back to you right now. And that realization is crushing

02/25/2021

Betsy and I finally make love. It had been a while. Something has been shut off in me—certainly much to do with the weed. Much to do with the blanched hangover of day smoking, white dead cells flower all over your consciousness—frost splats on glass—distance creeps in cause who knows what could be on the other side of that first splat. We made love and lugubriously lay intertwined in the dark. What a good, sexy, kind, lovely, hardworking, organized, lovely, friendly, critically thinking, honest, bold, unique woman I have married.

My lack of a larger sweeping, all encompassing vision for what life should be and the resulting dearth of “a track laid plan” has left me in a relatively weak position when it comes to planning for the future. Betsy’s talents and patience and goodness and moderation and steadiness has more than made up for my wide-eyed myopathy. Our relationship has become my first foundation—learning to understand, nurture, support, honor, mend, celebrate it is the story of your marriage.

02/24/2021

Working takes me far away. How do you reenter? Is reentry possible?

Even now I feel the fraud feeling slip in when she asks about my work. Slipping Jimmy. Lacking a confidence in self. An inability to be sincere and settled in self. Burdened by past actions, failure to mature, gaslit into a certain conception of self—arrogant, rebel, selfish, self-excluding, narrow worldview, disrespectful.

02/21/2021

Desiring to move towards socializing more sober and possibly doing a cleanse:

No caffeine; no alcohol; no THC.

What is that resistance from betsy? Why would she challenge the cleanse? How could it not be a good thing for me to do some kind of a cleanse? Has she been living with me for the last 17 odd years? She hasn’t seen the spread sheets, but I have, and they tell me I am due for a cleanse. Complaining that she can’t follow my rambling circling riff, but she’s not even trying to here it. She’s not even trying to match with some riffs of her own. Something that we could spin and give shape to together and yes the story is I am not technically good enough to take the lead and just play something because I don’t know what I am playing and my shakey ear gets especially shy when I am trying to play with someone…

02/12/2021

You come to me to talk about the day. You speak quietly and slowly with pauses. You seem fatigued and uninspired and beaten down. I am a bit hyped up and in focus mode. I resnet your slowness and your deliberateness as you review all the things that I already know and I wait expectantly for some new information. I love you and you are tired of dealing with the girls and all the domestic routines that start to grind one down in time.

Despite all of my abundant shortcomings and repulsive aspects, you love me and want to be close to me and love and work in mutual support and harmony. I have wandered away deep into myself and I fear I have left you alone when you needed me most.

We have two precious girls who are marvels—

Their health and safety and thriving has become our life organizing goal.

02/12/2021

Sometimes I muster up the energy to tell you something about my day, something that I am writing, something that I am learning about codign and you are so tired and distraacteda nd it is a doomed effort to get across to you or to contextualize what the fuck I am talking about and your interest might spark and then flag and I cannot help but feel a pang of disappointment, it shouldn’t be at you, it can’t be at you, this is impossible, but you are my only adult human that I am regularly I contact with of late and so I try to tell you things. I try to tell you things to have them validated. To build them with you because I am tired and have been tripping around with this ideazs in my head alone all year. We are both very isolated aren’t we. We need to find a way back. I seem to have my mother’s knack for doubling down to get deeper into an issue. My writing and my coding still feel like the way out of here ultimately, I just have missed something more about the big picture and I am sorry. I need to find a way back. We need to find a way back. I know we can find a way back. We will.

It felt good the other day when you spoke encouragingly about my writing.

02/09/2021

Monkey bread and berries, flowers from Mariano’s. A mile of green ivy wall to bounce my thoughts off of. The mad joy of a pensive walk.

Weakness is strength. Went very interior. Full launched the dream kingdom. Alone now. Insulated. Dedicated to the craft. The process. You are hurting. You are folding into yourself. You are nauseous. You are weakened and woozy and uneasy. Anxious. Having difficulty breathing. I leverage the adrenaline burst of my addiction to power through the day and find some sort of flow. This is a disaster. I am about to certify my some what specious unemployment request. I have hit a nadir with my focus on coding while my writing has exploded in process and quantity. Despite my stated desire to curtail my THC intake I am powering forward with my weekly program. Helena is under the weather. Esme is restless and active and testing our patience. The ideal aspects of this configuration begins to unravel. That which I had thought was the threat, is now holding this situation together.

“Thanks again for a lovely mother’s day. I feel good at the moment— this whole evening. Thank you for your love and support. I love you.”

02/05/2021

You have made this transformation possible. I feel new. I am new. I am creing creom a completely new place. I wshall try to frame what happened to me, but in some ways the details are not important. Our conclusions end up being the most important thing. Our true conclusions. Not the lies we tell ourselves so that we can sleep at night or kill our consciousness in the deep grey day that extends forever through the winter march towards spring sweet dawning. You have made all of this possible. Something in this has been about truly achieving independence from my family. This independence is going to make me a better partner. I hope I haven’t been a complete disaster as a partner, but I had to go to a special place for a while and reorientate myself and claim my own sense of ritual. I had to accept, really deeply accept the multiplicity of the wolr.d I think on some level perhaps out of a misdirected loyalty to my family I accepted aon some level the rejection of the multiplicity of this world. The possibly that other ethnicieis and faith groups have as rich of a lived experience and turht claim. That it was not a white judeo-christian god that goavce us our values as Amerincas. AS if God has favored us over other naothions. Extending the old testement favored nation status into our conception of ourselves. We’ll even help set up Isreal and make suere she stays safe. We are like God inn some way looking over little Isreal without all those nasty, heathen, lying Arabs breathing down her neck. Protect the holy land. Give us sopme traditional truths that we can crow about. The Christan America is awkward and either cynical or naïve. Incompetent or cruel?

02/02/2021

It is absurd that I haven’t added more to this letter over the last year, or ever really. I have thought about dropping your periodic notes. Check-ins to update you on my mindset, my projects, my thoughts words, creations, reflections on our life together. I have been blocked from sharing thse thoughts from you for some reason. I am sorry. This has been one of the many shortcomings of my creative process, but I am getting over that. I am getting over thinking about creative process and referring to myself as a writer and an artist. I am getting over it just like I am getting over thinking too deeply about where the keys are on the key board. They are just there. My body knows that they are there. My mind knows that they are there. I accept that they are there and in the place where they are. It is simply the way it is.

I saw you on a stage painting Tupac’s brain.

I saw you in the cafeteria. Tall and thin with a streak of red in your curly black hair and your bold jeans making your way around the buffet in the middle of the room.

Oh, my love, how can I encapsulate my feelings for you. How can I express my awe and appreciation for your you and your talents and your skills and the sacrifices that you have made for our family to make this possible. We are a team and I am so grateful for such an amazing partner. A partner that doesn’t dither about a lot of things, but who learns. Or looks or listening. Who feels and intuits and is kind.

I am so glad you are not an ideologe. You are concrete and substantial. Thoughtful and deferential. Firm in your convictions, and not insecure about them.

Good news: I need proof that I am free. I have settled on the fact that my unresolved tensions with my family were contributing to a long lasting, low to moderate level of depression. I have tried to manage this state with a reasonable diet (thanks to you!), exercise, getting enough sleep, trying to get deeply into things that I love, mediate, stretch, write, read, study

I’ll sing for the dawn.

Sweet Diana Dupris.

You spoke from your heart.

You spoke with moral aggression.

But I made it clear,

I would not confess.

Facing your god,

I plead the fifth on the fifteenth

All eyes on the ides.

My Brutus had come.

Sweet heaven alive.

Take me down to your waters.

My daughter arrives,

her hair braided up.

I look through these eyes.

I see flaming pianos.

On a purple beach.

Another day has died.

Sweet cycles to reach

Their seasonal conclusions.

I was a peach.

setting into the sea.

I read some Joyce.

Too some sun in the garden.

But had little choice.

I was already gone.

People exist.

Strong fist, strong palm,

Hustle and fib

Some day we shall fly

Tell me a truth.

Tell me a scheme to get pardoned.

I wronged you, my dear.

But I’ve mended my ways.

Look at the sky.

The autumn upon us.

The cross on your chest,

Gravely marks where you are.

Your tattooed your face.

I tried not to judge you.

But you seemed to invite

My critical gaze.

They came and checked in.

Right when you were leaving.

And now I’m alone,

My temple is gone.

I’m broke as a joke, dear,

I’ve drunk from the fountain.

I’m dragging up verses to etch in the dust

on the glass of the window of the hearse where I’m riding

Red finger wagging farewell to the throng.

Tongue white with recall.

Pageants remembered,

Too quick for enjoyment,

Too long to stay on.

Pulled by the forces,

Divorced from the cult lands.

Stranded on pavements laid down by the law.

You shook me out.

Of my stupor, I’m a stupid angel.

My wings are all singed.

From the candle of hope.

You wanted friends.

You wanted to drop a line down.

I stood by the well.

Mocking your fall.

I thought life was a joke.

I thought life was a punch line.

all the while you knew

all the old adages were all true.

The night came on like a siege.

Surrounding my ego isle.

Care for me now, child.

I’m an old man at last.

Any news of the Fox?

Any news of the orange sun setting?

Or the choppers we lost.

All abandoned at sea?

You set fire to yourself.

You ignited a coup, babe.

You were so cool

And yet so hot too.

I don’t know where it went.

I didn’t catch the endgame.

My interest was spent.

When the sponsor came on.

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Spoke with my mother today.

Spoke with my father yesterday.

My mother deals with so much death and stress and she internalizes it. And it feeds into her insecurity. And she speaks aloud. And she analyzes and she nourishes her community. And she judges and tries to make sense.

The impeachment proceedings did not come up with my mother or my father.

I want to read less news online and make more time to sit with the Economist and write.

I am writing stony and removed, sneaking off to my little room to talk to God or a computer or something. Feeling conflicted about putting on my wife— she is quiet and on her phone in the evening and I slip out to smoke some weed feeling stony and removed.

01/30/2021

0948 finally at my desk. Poison pill with betsy. “Let’s figure out how we can make today special!” My whole project has been about limiting distractions. She doesn’t acknowledge the subtext— its not about the day, its about our imperfect living arrangement. I am leaning on her. I am leaning on her. Attempting to climb to a new plateau—creatively, vocationally, productively… emerging prepared to lead my family over the coming decades.

2020 recalibrated our trajectory. Reset our key relationships. Reaffirmed our sense of health and well-being. Found a more grounded place to move from. I’d been floating and fliting and searching for a new foundation and now I’d found one. More solid and optimistic than the last one. More life affirming. Better equipped to navigate the toxic messaging that floats on the wind all around.

Performance is ego.

Outside a snowstorm

Inside smouldering angst with bet

But me still stoned in the study

Dancing my newly limber body

To some dreamy Walkman jams

Fixed the chill lightly, just right.

Reaching clearly for the vision

And then stretched.

12/23/2020

Tension over writing-coding-taking care of girls. Betsy feels put upon caring for these kids in such tight quarters.

I feel intense. Crabby. But that intensity is partially why I am good at learning things, no? I am growly and sulky and spit out something about how hard I am working.

Betsy I am buried.

Buried in years

Buried in meals

Buried in ideas

Buried in disappointment.

Betsy and I fall into an argument after I feel pressured to take the girls out instead of working so I agree, but then when I screw down on whether or not I have the wherewithal to take them out—I feel this incredible pressure to get to work, to focus, to move forward. Our battle of the sexes endures. She is savvry and is a fool not to negotiate. Women understand their men and operate them accordingly. Men understand wars and what it takes to win them—sometimes peace Trumps confrontations. Sometimes PEACE TRUMPS CONFLICT.

12/16/2020

My narrative keeps writing itself despite myself.

My wife, oh my wife, creative, loving, settling force of my life.

Still water beside which I can breath.

Cool body to chill the static mist all round.

My twenty year friend.

My two decade lover

We’ve made a life all along

Chicago, Berlin, Xi’an,

Grand Marais, Beijing—

When there with you.

Settling into life itself all along

Growing our garden of girls.

Singing our holiday songs.

12/3/2020

You were just the right balance of bold and shy for me.

Red lipstick, red dyed tuft of bang.

Goth baby in her freshman year.

You fill my heart.

11/30/2020

We lived with Peter in Berlin, Owen in Xian, and Spring in Chicago. Living with people likely helped us as a couple. All couples have their challenges, but I am so grateful for the shared lived experiences betsy and I had before having children. Those years shaped our priorities and our worldview and bonded us together in an important way.

11/19/2020

The resentment orb waxes and wanes.

Esme folding paper cranes in her blue shirt with white polka dots and flouncy sleeves.

Helena barges in lumbering and jolly, she is in grabby fingers mode, betsy follows her in and seems cross, she expresses her frustrations, but doesn’t take Helena back out. I feel my unraveling time, unraveling and getting away from me, unraveling and unspooling through my fingers.

11/29/2020

A bit of land, a work shop or perhaps a writing cabin.

Well appointed kitchen, room for children, grand children.

We could learn to build. Be people

Who live places, put down roots.

10/30/2020

But what is the point here? I am not trying to be cute. I am trying to mine language for interesta dn inspiration. I am looking for inspiration. Baked into it. Backed deeper and driving into the core of the process. Attempting to find your process. Attempting to find focus and inspiration.

As much as I enjoy alcohol and marijuana, I know that I need to seboth aside if I am going to free up more time and means to push through my current economic and employment situation.

I have enjoyed working in the room here. betsy’s work room is a good space for me. It is contained and the containment feels like it could help me concentrate. I could get my reference books in order and have my references at hand. I can work hard in this room and make some progress with my goals.

In general, I want my family to thrive.

I want to consolidate the past and not let it drag on me.

I want to anticipate the future (both consciously and with excitement)

If you ever get cross examined by my Imam, I want you to feel fullhearted and confident that I have flourished since getting the distance I should have fully enforced long ago.

I am cutting way back on marijuana and keeping my drinking on the nice dialed back even keel feed we have been grooving on. I have been a habitually user of marijuana these last few years and I am convinced now that I have been using it as a block to hold back the negative emotions that my uneasy ideological separation from my family was causing me. The unease combined with my continued vocational frustrations put me in a position where I was continually questioning my position. While the fundamentals of our life has been so good, without a concrete vision forward vocationally, my dreams and plans seemed insubstantial, self-serving, doomed to fail. Not seeing a clear path out of my vocational deadend I felt in someways that my parents judgements on me had some validity. I was so open my brains were falling out. He spent all that time studying Chinese and he works at a jewelry store. While my fundamentalist parents have worked diligently from their late teens straight through to their 60s building a massive family and setting up a healthy bountiful retirement! My parents are winners. They are kind of killing it no? They have no debt. Like a million dollars in retirement savings, a pension coming from the hospital and social security.

Looking where we are financially at 40, I got to say I think they took the more prosperous path and I commend them for it and I am astounded by how much they have been able to provide for our ever expanding family. While I am not a materialist I certainly can’t fall back on the material proof on good choices and wise decisions. That said, I can’t get down on fiances too much. We have $40,000 in the bank, funds coming in from the government, possibly health insurance for the girls as well.

We both know the narrative is a lot more complicated than that, but these are the conversations aren’t they. And without any good, solid answers for myself, I felt like I couldn’t completely put those conversations to bed. The circular, ultimately work-a-day despairing conclusions I kept reaching (combined with my deep love and respect) kept an edge in the Imam’s preaching.

I had a plan now- the coding, but how could I answer, the ultimately more fundamental questions of political and spiritual allegence. I remained an uneasy heretic.

The funny thing is is I really don’t know what I believe.

Religion is deeply important, but it can get ugly when mixed with politics.

If you are hitting somebody, it doesn’t matter if you are using a bat or the cross.

And then, the Trumpian rocket fuel was thrown on the fire and the pressure grew and grew and grew. And incredible it grew on both sides. What a demagogue! Kind of amazing. Now he is claiming to be immune from Covid-19 and have a warm protective glow around him. Very important. And so, the Trumpian rocket fuel

Take my hand and lead me on. Let our dear communion be that which grounds me here on this earth, this planet, in this life, Let this bond be that mystical first purpose, that destined life, that star found and bowed to eternally, in friendship and desire.

I’ve been untrue to you. I’ve let my pot smoking and drinking get beyond me. I’ve engaged in both compulsively, annoyingly. The only defense I can make, the only way I can rationalize the time and money I have wasted getting wasted and burying my anxiety is that I have been in an extremely intense creative and emotional period. Its just so painful but also so cathartic. I have cried more this fall that probably any season in the last decade… ever? They have been sobbing, cathartic undulations of emotion. Something leaving me. Some dark breath running up my throat and escaping through the gaping hole in my head. I have been getting free and I am so grateful for your patience and giving me the time and the space to work through these things.

That said, I am also a skeptic and I have wrestled back and forth with the question of is this real? Am I truly finding my vocation, or have I just completely lost my mind.

After engaging in this process for the last month I can confidently say that I am finding my mind. I am making it back and returning to some former position of hope and idealism and interest that has been buried in the last decade of work. But the last decade was all about getting our family established, And we did this!! The previous decade was about establishing our relationship. This last decade was about establishing our family, and now as a unit I believe we are ready to move forward. Rat year I will take your message of renewal. Once again the Rat brought the plague… once again the Rat has brought us to the precipice of a new cycle. I can feel it in me and I can feel it politically in this country. I am hopeful now and feel like I “Know Myself” more and feel like I have a deeper understanding of how I need to operate. And how I can be a better father and husband and friend. And I am committed to staying in this process and doing those things.

It all starts with you though love. I cannot stress that enough. You truly are my other half, my partner, my companion, my challenger, my lover, my helpmate, my liege. We understand what is hard and why it is hard and we work from there. We work at it and we refine. We try to find ways through. We stay agile and reassess. We evolve and we grow and we strive towards hope and light and beautiful, interesting, soul brightening things- our girls, our families, our projects, our plans.

Being in the right silence. Stretching and meditating and freeing myself to truly write whatever bubbles up from my right silence has gone a long way to healing me. There is no salvation though. There is no cup that will wash away the drag of time or the disorientating matrix of asynchronous responsibilities that unravel us. I am focused on returning my mind to its VALUE STATE. I state my values and let everything settle. Something cause my chest to tighten- look closer, what value do you see in there. What is this idea calling you to do? What actionable thing can you do. If there is nothing there, no value, no action, there fucking release it.

I have had some success this week in particular with identifying things that are causing me ambient anxiety or negative feelings. Acknowledging them, inviting them to provide me with creative insight or expression, taking them up on their offer if engage, or just forgiving them and letting them drift on, releasing them from my psychic matrix. They are litter if they refuse to integrate. You can either grate or integrate.

I know that I love you and that is enough. I need a vocation, but I know even more than that I need to write. Writing gets me right. For a long while I have been denied entry into this right silence. My Bedlam voices and my obsidian stone have blocked me. I have been a somnambulist hacking at a keyboard. I have left my little bags of emotional vomit all over the world in scrawled out explosions of various degrees of legibility. I have been unable to confront these voices practically, I have been unable to form my own metaphor, my own vision, my own soulstar map of the Unknown Youniverse. I have been stressed and unhappy with my job and doubly brought low without any kind of a horizon line vision for moving forward. What does moving forward even look like beyond getting our savings up so we can make some kind of move when the time comes. Well, that half-assed strategy seemingly actually worked. And that’s to the pandemic and a U-Haul truck, I think we are moving on! My creative life has been marked by fragmentation and some sort of block from truly getting into a full-hearted process. I think I had some kind of conception of creative work as being some ind of incredible spontaneous act of will. A volition with a clear starting and ending point. A laser defined intention shot from my bow straight through the fucking bullseye of my dreams. Now I understand that my quiver is full and my process can entail shotting like a madman. Stopping time. Approaching the target and then removing all those arrows that didn’t quite make the mark.

Order comes from abstraction.

11/14/2020

My programming backlog has me feeling full low.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

08/04/2020

It is ridiculous that in all the writing I have been doing over these past months none of it has been explicity directed to you. I think this speaks a little ebit about where I have been where I have gone. I think I have left you in an attempt to grow beyond and and grow beyond us and to protect us from where I was heading with my work. Which seems really vague and I truly hope to have a better description of it all soon. The simple answer is I don’t know what is going on. I have either authenticating finally connected with the muse approved process of my life’s work or I have simply just lost my mind. I am force to believe the former is the truth of the matter as I the depth to which I have now involved myself in this process and become consumed by it there is truly no real hope a return that is not marked by success or some sort of collapse and complete teardown and rebuild. I have burnt the ships so to speak. This has been the year I have need and wanted and have unfortunately at times been just completely overwhelmed and overrun by. Having completely given myself over to it though has put me in a position like a gulf-stream cradled corpse have been able to rapidly advance into a sprialing deeper and more sophisticated writing structure and process. I realize this is truly what I have always lacked. Despite my infinite turnover of focusing and organizing schemes I never really got very far wiwth specific writing project development. Having tried to clip all but one rose and having banged out stories in college that were written with deadlines and youthful fool mountain yodel cry confidence, I truly had never tried the scatter shot, mutli-project approach that has naturally evolved out of the Yellow River process. The individual nodes having glinted with some subtle or not so subtle saliency, filling themselves on their own timelines as relevant and related material presents itself in my reading and writing and thinking and conversation and entertainment. This puts me in a position to use material across a variety of projects. Allows my writing process to be accumulative. I am ultimately not an expert on any of this, but I do have a certain level of development to my judgement, sense of organization, argument, tone, and color empathetically connecting with your audience through your shared or disparate diagram of connections and mutually alien experiences.

How to contextualize this simmering wick. I think I need a good clean week to get my perspective in check on properly articulated. I do not have to be embarrassed about being well spoken. I don’t have to be embarraseed at thaving taken this long to find my vocation. I have chosen long, arching, nearly impossible to perfect skills. Skills that have no set degree or venue, but that which can be applied to anything anywhere and they exist in me. I have found a way to work in this world and I am attempting to prove my path true. I am attempting to simultaneously consolidate and expand my talents and abilities while at the same time avoid a mental health crisis brought on by the pressures of being out of work, distanced from put upon and depressed wife and delightful but needy children. Not to mention the distance and unsettled nature of my relationship with my siblings and my own roiling issues with marijuana and alcohol and my now tragically comical Hamlet act about if I am or if I am not or if I might just yet still become an actual writer. When it is obvious that I have been a writer for many years. Just not a very good one. Not a very organized or focused one. Not a very disciplined one. One that did not have a vision or a membership. One that often would beat the shit out of himself for being so focused on such an insular self-obsessive craft. Inability over the years to develop my writerly infrastructure— relationships built around the practice, connections. Aside from friends who read, I really faultered on this front andI think mainly because my writing always followed me back a few years. As I could never get current with my projects, or even complete with any of my projects, the discipline has always seemed like a work in progress that really shouldn’t see the life of day. Add to this the mid-life parental plain of fragmentation and distraction and responsibilities and necessary self-denial, pet projects become actions of violence against your spouse as your indulgence puts a heavier burned on their back, on their psyche. You find yourself alienated from even the potentiality of your being a productive and creative person. So far from being marketable, professional and thus useless. Not instant, not broad or temporally opinionate. Lacking the correct sharpness to the flint heads on the arrows I sling.

I am tired. I am desperate. I am confused. I am scared. I don’t know why I am being so dramatic. I guess it is because I am stoned and then also because I have been trying to be a write and write something complete and complete things that I can consistently share, giving myself the ability to connect with people through my absolute favorite means of self-expression, building through the act of communication and the shared appreciation of words creating a culture of language which informs value which informs connection which informs learning and negotiation. I am so grateful to all of the people that have made up for my lack of wherewithal. They have given so much. I have held back because I was fragmented and felt unable to roll the entire universe into a ball. Not up for the task of saying everything to everyone in everything I say and write. Neurotic and dumb, mining the depths of my mysterious source of aplumb.

The pressure I feel is like a burning fuse. Do you feel it too? You can’t breath and I am hardly breathing. Manic. Distant. Swimming out farther than I have ever swam before. Teetering on the edge unclear on if I am at my healthiest or most ill. Impossibly behind. Unclear about how to proceed aside from depositing a ton of time and energy that I don’t have. Feeling like a fire that keeps getting gasoline dumped on it.

She comes in concerned about the crookedness of the couch. How the rug is bunched up under it. I have been in the room all day and have not noticed it. She just walked in and it is driving her up the wall. She raises the tension and dissatisfaction level in the room by several degrees.

We spin, we conflate, we connect, we obsess, we formulate, we mirror, we wander, we wonder, we demand.

28JULY2019

Oh my love, here is where I shall first leave my thoughts to you. You whom I have loved and failed. You whom I have loved and provided for. You whom I have grown with this half of my life. One half left with grace, with luck. In you my voice is heard. Angry boy, hurt boy in the world. Loving man, loving man in the world. Let me come to you in slience. Let me come ot you in muttering and proclamations.