



CAR OF THE JUGGERNAUT

FAREWELL  
MY SWEET JUGGERNAUT

*a fond farewell from peter streicher*

## PREFACE: A BRIEF HISTORY

The preface of this document is new. The remainder was written over six years ago—other than a handful of updates, it's very much the same. I decided to share it with you because some of the content is still relevant and I don't have the time/energy for the re-writes it desperately needs. I hope it will help you realize my death is the culmination of a life long struggle with depression and anxiety. I'm going to keep this preface/update short because the note is much too long as it is.

I should tell you this isn't my first suicide attempt. I've never been very good at *Life and How to Live It*. The first occurred when I was 16 and the second (which wasn't an intentional attempt—I'll explain) occurred roughly five years ago. The later is an absurd story—I laugh whenever I think of it. I began writing this note in 2007 during one of my many deep dives into depression. I had made a promise to myself in 2006 that I'd give life another year. I decided I would use that time to see if I could turn myself around—*choose life!* Clearly, I wasn't satisfied with my progress so I began writing this note and researching methods to end my life. The obvious choice was a gun, but leaving a nasty mess was something I wanted to avoid.

Long story short, I came across the “exit bag” method (simplify explanation: fill large bag with gas—lay down—fasten/seal around your neck—fall asleep—suffocate). This sounded like a decent method. Cut To: me running an experiment with nitrous oxide. I had every intention of only testing it, but once I was deep into the effects, I remember feeling a tremendous release... I was falling through the darkness—and it felt amazing. I remember not caring that the letter wasn't finished... Other ridiculous thoughts ran through my mind—like how my apartment was a mess, or how someone would find my porn, or that I left the door locked... My mind laughed at these passing thoughts—they didn't matter. I just kept falling through the darkness... It felt wonderful. This is going to sound cliché (because it is—isn't everything when you get down to it?), but I actually saw a light and I was moving toward it. I'm not sure if I saw it because the idea had been culturally planted in my mind or it's some chemical trick in the eyes/brain caused by lack of oxygen, or both, or, or, what does it matter? I can only report what I experienced. So, there I was... falling toward the light. I was thrilled! Everything was finally OK. The release was complete and I felt it with every fiber of my being, then—

— **BAM!** —

—when I came to, I was vomiting all over myself and the floor. Somehow the bag was off my head and I was... painfully and miserably alive. Later, I came to understand the body has a mind of its own. My arms and hands must have ripped the bag off my head in a fit of oxygen deprivation (it probably had more to do with the presence of too much CO<sub>2</sub>—it's complicated). I was sick for days. I didn't have a job at the time so I was able to conceal the event.

I'm telling you this because the experience taught me a valuable lesson. There's really no *clean* way to exit this world. Employing complicated methods isn't a good idea... which is why I decided to use a gun this time. It makes a terrible mess, but statistically, it's the most reliable way to die by suicide. I took extensive measures to contain the mess, but I won't know if they were successful or not.

After my exit bag experiment, I decided to give life yet another chance. This was around the time I began volunteering for Hospice. I thought helping people with problems "worse" than my own would temper my misery and bring a sense of purpose. It gave me focus, but in the end, I needed to make money (the unavoidable/never ending pursuit of unhappiness that wo(man)beings created for someone's reason or another) so I could live. Wait...doesn't that sound ridiculous? A person has to make money so they can live... *Nobody* (Blackfoot Indian character in Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man*) was right: "*Stupid white man.*" I digress.

From there I started MEDIAWORKS at Goodman Community Center. This was my attempt to gain a sense of purpose by being a positive/creative influence on kids. It was also an attempt live on \$11/hour (which didn't work—I went into significant credit card debt trying to keep the program going and keep myself fed). In the end, I was thankfully able to turn program over Kathleen Ward and move on to a more financially sustainable job at 5NINES.

I was still struggling with depression and anxiety, but at least I had some financial breathing room and could pay back the debt I accrued. I worked for three and a half years at 5NINES doing what I had done for most of my professional life: sitting at desk all day—staring at a computer screen—clicking and pushing buttons. Finally, my body and mind just couldn't take it anymore so I decided I was done—completely done. To be clear: my decision had absolutely nothing to do with 5NINES—it just happens to be where I was working when I decided (for reasons I attempt to explain in the rest of this note) I'd had enough. I left 5NINES and began preparations for my departure. And so on...

## INTRODUCTION

It's over. As I understand it, a note accompanying a death by suicide is an exception and not a rule.<sup>†</sup> I decided to leave one because I felt I owed you an explanation. It's *really* long and probably too much, but it didn't seem right to depart without an attempt to explain the unexplainable. You can decide if I should have let silence stand (sometimes employing the *Science of Shutting Up* is the wisest choice—something I've never been very good at). I had hoped this project would make me realize how silly it was to end my own life—essentially a way to talk myself *out* of it. I also made a *deal*<sup>‡</sup> with myself that I couldn't die by suicide until this note captured the essence of my motivations and explained them in a way that wouldn't cause more confusion—of course, this should have postponed my death indefinitely. I've spent a ridiculous amount of time on this note and I highly doubt it's getting significantly “*better*,” so I need to stop.<sup>§</sup> Confusion is inevitable and clarity is an unattainable ideal. If you're reading this, all of my deals and weighing absurdity didn't dissuade me.

If I've learned anything from the process, it's this: There's a reason why most suicides don't leave a note—it's hard work and it's impossible to make it “*right*.” You feel because it will be considered your “*final statement*,” it had better be thorough, clear, and well written. Thoughts and feelings rarely make sense when you try turning them into words because the words we share are put upon us and have nothing to do with our first language—the internal voice that is ours alone as individuals. It's obvious to me that even the simplest “reality” is totally different for each of us. It's also possible that some people don't want their suicide note to define them by being *the last thing anyone will remember*. But what the hell—I'm going to risk it.

One knows what one knows and one sees what one sees,  
but it's never any good telling anyone about it.

—Wandering Gypsy Woman

Ingmar Bergman's, *The Magician*

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† Approximately one in four people leave a note. —according to *some wo(man)being's* research.

‡ Who doesn't love a deal?

§ With the countless rewrites and edits, you and I might expect it to be better than it is—but this perfect example of why one should never edit their own work. Believe it or not, this document was over 100 pages at one point—how self-indulgent is that?! It's shorter now, but if “less is more,” I definitely “*must have taken a wrong turn in Albuquerque*.”

There's also the risk of the reader experiencing a lasting focus on specific details or explanations.† Having focus is normal and critical to the very nature of paying attention, but it's important to remember that when you read Cliffs Notes®‡ you're actually missing what really matters—the *experience*.§ As you peruse this manifesto,¶ keep in mind you're reading the Cliffs Notes® to the Cliffs Notes® 42 times removed from the actual Cliffs Notes® (I simply didn't have time to write my biography and if I did, it would have pushed your patience far past its end—something I suspect this note will accomplish in far fewer pages). Suffice it to say there are many things I won't, and or can't share with you. There's no story without a lingering mystery and we all deserve a few secrets, Yes? Yes.

Much of this note will attempt to address the question usually on everyone's mind—*why?* It would be upsetting if after reading this note you find you're more confused than when you started. If this is the case, it's entirely my fault.

This message is not for the faint of heart\*\* Regardless of this warning, I would like it made available to anyone who wishes to read it—because *everyone* loves a circus. Like I always say: “*wo(man)beings can justify anything*”†† So let's get started!

So much time and so little to do.  
Wait a minute. Strike that. Reverse it.  
—Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka*

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† I can assure you there's nothing in this note worth dwelling on.

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§ Of course, there are approximately 7,194,301,175 (and counting) different ideas of *what matters*.

¶ Manifesto... what a great word.

\*\* Faint of *proper grammar heart*, that is... **Be warned:** You will most certainly encounter typos, bad grammar, delusion, distortion, jumping from one tense to another, pretension, presumption, gross self-indulgence, sweeping generalizations, accidental lies, unbearable run-ons, preposterous statements, waxing poetic, footnote abuse, mixed metaphors, shameless romanticizing, repetition, illogic, flagrant ellipsis and em-dash abuse, dangling something or others, unsuccessful attempts at humor, and relentless non-sequiturs. Did I say repetition?

†† I refer to our species as wo(man)beings. The parentheses around (man) is to signify that men come from the womb of wo(men). It seems to make more sense when referring to our species in the third person to say, as an example: “For all wo(man)kind,” or “Wo(man) is descended from apes, and it shows.” I just think it's more inclusive, and we certainly don't want everyone to feel left out, eh?

*My death is **nobody's** fault but my own.*

*There's **nothing** anyone could have,  
might have, or should have  
done to stop it.*

*There's no way **anyone** could have,  
or should have known it was  
going to happen.*

## CHAPTER 44: A NEW BEGINNING

First, I would like to apologize for the mess I've left behind. Life and death are equally messy so it seems unavoidable. When one considers the mess we make throughout our entire life, my seemingly *early* exit and final mess can probably be reconciled. I wish there was a *cleaner* way, but there are laws against this sort of thing.<sup>†</sup> In the off chance my attempt is unsuccessful and I'm left in a vegetative state, *please* put me out of my misery. Please don't extend any special measures to keep me alive and above all, do not resuscitate.

I'm sorry that it's come to this. There's nothing anyone could have done—so please, none of the “*if only*” talk we've all heard so much about in situations like this. Suicide is definitely a selfish act, and I take full responsibility. It's all about the right to chose—*my* will, *my* body, *my* decision. Rest assured—the decision was difficult.

My thinking tends to be libertarian. That is, I oppose intrusions of the state into the private realm—as in abortion, sodomy, prostitution, pornography, drug use, or suicide, all of which I would strongly defend as matters of free choice in a representative democracy.

—Camille Paglia

I need to make it clear I didn't do<sup>‡</sup> this out of anger or malice toward anyone. I'm also not deliberately trying to hurt anyone. As people are wont to say: “*It's not about you.*” I realize this is upsetting, disappointing and even horrible, but no one should take it personally. The main reason I've been avoiding suicide is for fear of how it will effect everyone—but I can't go on living because all of you want me to. I have to want it for *myself*. Perhaps you can pretend I was in an accident (which may be true depending on your point of view) —Or imagine I had a heart attack (which feels true as well)—Or you can imagine I've moved away (depending on *if* there

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<sup>†</sup> There really should be a kit a person can purchase, but as *they* say, life is sacred and must be preserved... unless you believe you have enemies. If this is the case, life isn't sacred at all.

<sup>‡</sup> I'm not entirely sure what tense I'm supposed to use throughout this document so you're going to have to put up with whatever I decide to use at the time.

is something after life, this could be the most true. If there's nothing, well... then nothing). There are so many ways to look at this event.<sup>†</sup>

“You know, I once read an interesting book which said that most people lost in the wilds—they die of shame. ‘What did I do wrong? How could I have gotten myself into this?’ And so they sit there and they... die. Because they didn’t do the one thing that would save their lives. Thinking.”

—David Mamet, Billionaire Charles Morse, *The Edge*

If you think about it (*extensively like I have—possibly too much thinking*), depression could be seen as a form of terminal *cognitive/mental* cancer that effects every part of your body. It's always there and you can't reason with, or outsmart it. You can treat it—and it can go into remission, but it festers and ultimately it returns to finish what it started. I know it sounds melodramatic, but this cancer has finally consumed me—my mind and heart. I want to thank psychiatrists, therapists, and pharmaceutical companies (yes, even them) for the amazing things they're doing. They—just as you, did their best to help me cope and or alleviate my suffering. It's difficult to face the fact that *some people just don't get better*.

Everyone does their best to cope with *The Madness of it All*.<sup>‡</sup> A vast majority of people self-medicate with alcohol or illegal drugs (I sometimes wish my body could tolerate alcohol and other forms of artificial joy—it seems to help some folks cope), while others take on a cause—their kids, careers, etc.. I haven't been able to embrace any of these... Some of us are killing ourselves without fully realizing it. We don't take care of ourselves, we drink, smoke, *insert whatever you like*, eat too much, engage in risky behavior, etc.. I would argue that death in many cases is just one long-drawn-out-suicide. *So please*—don't get hung up on the fact that I took my own life.

*We The People* demand immediate gratification. Our heads are filled preposterous notions and unrealistic expectations, e.g., if one takes a pill (or three) their attitudes and perceptions can become more healthy. My mental cancer is apparently impervious to pills, cognitive therapy, and *talking about it*. I'm done trying to manage my

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<sup>†</sup> A book that you might find helpful: *Why People Die By Suicide* by Thomas Joiner. I think his perspectives are accurate and refreshing.

<sup>‡</sup> Everyone run to your window and yell: “I'm mad as hell—and I'm not gonna take it anymore!” google it if you don't get the reference.

symptoms. I'm tired of testing my luck on the roulette wheel of pills—and I can't stay in therapy forever. Some people refer to suicide as a "*permanent solution to a temporary problem*." Well, I'm here to tell you that in some cases, *there's nothing more permanent than a temporary problem*. I think it will be evident to all after reading this note that my decision to die by suicide was not an act of haste.

Happiness can and must be created. Seeking  
is for those who are lost—I should know.

—Peter Streicher Narrator, *Suicide King*<sup>2004</sup>

I've always said I would choose the time of my exit. Maybe it's sooner than most of you thought. You probably already know I'm a control freak—everything in it's right place and time. I've done my best to avoid overwhelming others with *my drama*. I certainly don't want to be anyone's "project." I appreciate the love, concern, and friendship all of you have given me. I certainly wouldn't have made it this far without you. Whatever happiness I've had, is thanks to you.

Who says everything has a purpose? The world's a jungle. You want my advice? Don't expect happiness—you won't get it. People let you down. I won't mention any names. But, in the end, you die in your own arms. It's all a big nothing. What makes you think you're so special?†

—David Chase Livia Soprano, *The Sopranos*

There are places the human mind can find itself in which there is no escape.‡ There's no magic pill to bring you back. No amount of '*working on it*' can re-route the worn in neural pathways. Understanding your motivations, shame, anger, or pain doesn't make them any easier to deal with. Does knowing why uranium is radioactive change the fact that it's deadly? You can't un-know or un-see something—which leads into my theory of depression being partially caused by inability to forget, compartmentalize, or fully actualize denial... but this is a topic for another essay (it's probably been written about extensively or it's a completely ridiculous notion). Some things can't be helped—some people can't be helped. There are scrubby evergreen

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† That Livia... she was something else, eh? \*grin

‡ Much like the spider in your tub... isn't it odd that they can't get out? It's sad to think of all the evil villains who have toiled in vain to destroy Spider Man—when all they had to do was build a over sized bathtub and toss him in it.

trees living on mountain cliffs that are *wind trained*. They're battered by fierce and constant winds from a single direction as they grow. When mature, they look as if they're being bent by a gale force wind—even on the calmest morning. You can try, but no amount of intervention, chemicals, or therapy are going to right them. Are wo(man)beings any different?

I've read quite a bit on the subject of *why a person shouldn't end their own life*. The most compelling and condensed list of reasons I've come across is here: <http://lostallhope.com/help-me> This is an excellent site. My only response to them is I'm so utterly exhausted and tired of fighting that I just can't do it anymore. I'm empty. The moments I feel ok (meaning I have control of my depression) are becoming fewer and far between. I'm either in the darkest of darks or in the twilights where I can see, but the colors graying and hard to make out. The sun never rises above the horizon. I want (and try to a failing degree) to share my feelings with those around me, but people can only take so much... and the story gets old. Contrary to what *they* say, a person can be too much to bear—a burden. And so on...

*Alright...* I've been putting it off, but I'll try address the *why* question in earnest. I've edited out *most* of my stream of conscious reactions to this question. They tend to be cryptic (I can imagine you're thinking: *worse than it already is!?*)—which leads to misinterpretation—which could lead some to conclude outright lunacy (which may be true, but why foster it?).

*Why* is that evergreen tree growing out of the side a rocky cliff? *Why* not? *Why* anything? We are all *just who we are...* At the end of the day, the *why* doesn't mean a thing. It doesn't matter. You're alive and I'm not. You choose life, and I didn't. People want a cause for the effect... accountability for the action. Well, how about, "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." —In a way I guess that means *everything* is equal or equalizes out. There's something comforting and extremely unsettling about that. In my case the *action* might be my involuntary birth into a world I can't cope with and the *reaction* is my departing it of my own freewill?

Life is like stepping onto a boat  
which is about to sail out to sea and sink.  
—Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

We're all walking *life's little labyrinth*—some desperately, some content with the challenge of the path. I've struggled—to put it mildly. Frankly, I don't know how I've made it this far. Some people like to talk about the “*mid-life crisis*.” Some of us suffer a *mid-life crisis* every year. I should say I don't feel hopeless in terms of what I can and cannot do with my life. I think I can achieve most things I might set out to do. I simply don't have the desire or the drive to pursue them anymore. “*The thrill is gone*.” I'm painfully ambivalent. The years pass and my desperate struggle for meaning, purpose, joy, and contentment has grown increasingly difficult and unbearable.

What is one to do when everything they sense feels utterly disconnected and without joy? How dreadful it is to know you are personally responsible for cutting connections that you needed. To see beauty and horror with the same indifference is torture. I can see them, but all too often, can't feel them. How is it to know a symphony is playing and be deaf? Or to be blind in a museum of fine art? I've attempted to face this with good humor. In fact, it's my sense of humor that's helped me endure. It's allowed me to construct personas that mask my misery to the rest of the world. I've often wondered how one is *supposed* to act when they've hit the bottom. Should I be cutting and drinking Drāno™† to garner attention? While that sounds like fun, it's really not who I am.

When the camel of our efforts sinks into the mud, what matter  
whether the destination is near or far?

—Ustad Khalilullah Khalili, *Quatrains* 1975

I'm trying to explain the *why*, but it's clearly not possible. All explanations sound foolish and trite. I guess it comes down to this: **You either “*get it*” or you don't.**‡ There's no explanation I can give that will make you understand or accept, or not have a “better solution” for. My reasons and feelings are mine alone. I'm not sure why I'm like this—does it really matter?§ Does knowledge change reality? Perhaps

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† Drāno is a registered trademark of SC Johnson —A Family Company™... a “family” dedicated to Fücking® our environment in everyanyway possible—with our shoulder shrugging resignation and complicity, of course... “*Stupid white man*.” Frank Loyd Wright designed their headquarters so I'm sure they feel this gives them *carte blanche* to do whatever they please.

‡ This might be the truest statement in this document.

§ It's bound to come up somehow, so I'm going to tell you now. My grandfather killed himself. OK. His death might relate to mine? Maybe. Maybe there's a genetic indicator for self-destruction? Or maybe DNA has intelligence and it realizes “*something's not right with this one*.” Maybe Chromosome 17 is the culprit?

through my death, you will see the value of your existence—something I’ve heard.  
*There’s always hope. Everything happens for a reason, etc..*

The world has no being but an allegory: From end to end its  
state is but farce and play.

—Shabistari, *Secret Garden*, 13th Century

It’s ironic that a man who has always had *everything anyone would ever want* could never keep it together—could never hold onto it—in fact pushed it away. My life has been the culmination of one self-inflicted crisis after another. I don’t want to deal with it anymore. I certainly don’t want to keep inflicting pain on those around me with my crises. My *issues* have I’ve ruined too many intimate relationships. It’s a pattern of madness that I keep repeating and it has to stop... and I really have tried to stop it, but there’s clearly a critical part of me that’s so completely shattered—my internal Humpty Dumpty if you will. I can’t help but think a man who can’t appreciate what he has probably doesn’t deserve it. This is *My Decadent Misery* and I can’t forgive or make allowances to myself any longer.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men  
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.

—James William Elliott<sup>†</sup>

I’m tired of trying to put Humpty back together again. Tired of the introspection... searching for pieces... fitting them together only to have them fall apart again and again. Maybe I should “*stop being so hard on myself?*” Or maybe I should stop this narcissistic, self-indulgent diatribe? Yeeaahhh—Nope...there’s more (I warned you this note was going to drone on...).

Perversity: The human thirst for self torture.

—Edgar Allen Poe

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<sup>†</sup> The common modern text is credited to him from his *National Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Songs* (London, 1870). The earliest known version was published in Samuel Arnold’s *Juvenile Amusements* in 1797.

Years of cognitive therapy... years of psychiatrists trying various drugs to alleviate my depression and anxiety and all the side effects that go along with that roller coaster... countless visits to medical doctors, chiropractors, massage therapists, physical therapists, and acupuncturists to address a chronic (*driving me fucking crazy*) sciatic nerve problem. Are there people who are suffering “more” than myself? I’m sure there are—but suffering is personal... It’s not a contest. I have no interest in trying to figure out who’s suffering more. “*You think that’s bad, what about this...*” I’m glad Christopher Reeves and a whole legion of who-knows-who did and do a bunch of wonderful things at the peak of *ultimate* suffering. Good for them. I hope I’ve done some good things too, but I’d guess “*it’s nothing compared to so and so...*” And so on.

Our culture<sup>†</sup> is gravely ill, and I’m part of—and worse, addicted to it! It’s as addictive and poisonous as cigarette smoking. We’ve taken *Theatre of the Absurd* and turned it into *Culture of the Absurd*—which is perfectly and ridiculously wacky wonderful, but whenever I try to engage it in a “*meaningful*” way, I just feel like an imposter and utterly silly. **The Beauty:** we possess super powers of love, ingenuity, and creation. We’re truly amazing creatures. **The Horror:** with all of our amazing powers, *this* (insert arms extending and a circular body spin) is the best we can do...? It’s a land where wickedness not only goes unpunished, it’s encouraged and rewarded. Yes, yes, yes—yin and yang—I know all of that. I guess celebrating diversity also means embracing the mindless horror? No... I’m sorry, but we’re grossly out of balance—koyaanisqatsi.

I know... David Byrne is right: “*same as it ever was—same as it ever was...*” I should present tangible examples, but all any wo(man)being has to do is read and pay attention for themselves... I could mention any of the unspeakable dehumanizing horrors our government and financial institutions<sup>‡</sup> commit—not to mention the horrors it ignores (both here and abroad) in our name with our funding and complicity. We’re all accomplices in these acts. What do I expect people to *do*? Nothing. We’re all much too busy to do *anything*. That’s the beauty of our perpetual horror machine. It runs on *nothing*. Besides, it doesn’t matter what we *do*—willing or not, we’re still

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† I’m not sure we can use the word *Culture* to describe the monstrosity we’ve become... The land where a fish desperately needs two bicycles, but a child can’t get health care or enough to eat.

‡ I guess I didn’t need to list them separately. Our government and financial institutions are one in the same. Jeez... this sounds terribly accusatory—like I expect everyone to do ‘something.’ I’m trying to say I don’t think there’s much a person who’s part of the 95 or 99% can do at this point short of outright revolution (which would be instantly snuffed out by our massive military). We’re all just trying to carve off a piece of happiness and there’s nothing wrong with that. “*When the world is running down, you make the best of what’s still around.*” —Sting

accomplices. We have created, live in, and support a xenophobic military state (many are even proud of their irrational stupidity)—an empire that kills so it's people can nurse their denial. I know, I know, I know—it's just how it is... "*we need to learn to accept the things we can't change, find the courage to change the things we can...*" Fine. I get it. Life takes Life. Of course... this is nothing new—*war is—and always has been the answer*. Like it or not, it's who we are... from the biggest bomb to the smallest barb. It's what our country was founded on—that and the genocide of this land's native population—and the enslavement of... and, and... Hmm... Maybe we're getting what we deserve? Karma? We probably shouldn't *think* about it.

A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself from within.

—William James Durant

I had the hair-brained thought we might all be characters in some Cosmic Hollywood remake of the Dark Ages. We've found new and improved ways to dehumanize ourselves and others—completely under the guise of freedom and ideals we claim to hold sacred. Don't get me wrong, I love a good Dark Age<sup>†</sup> as much as the next person. It will make a great cosmic summer blockbuster.

In America all too few blows are struck into flesh. We kill the spirit here, we are experts at that. We use psychic bullets and kill each other cell by cell.

—Norman Mailer

Work, work, work... Ah, the joys of the computing revolution! The privilege of sitting on one's ass and clicking buttons for 8-10 hours per day. Most of it's *Bullshit Work*: <http://www.strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/> The human body isn't designed for this and yet we've built a world where wo(man)beings sit on their asses—inside office buildings with windows that don't open—mousing and typing endlessly. The

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<sup>†</sup> I don't have time to explain why I believe we're entering a dark age. I hope we're not—and I hope you disagree with my POV. I better say I realize *it's not all bad*. I can see this is making me sound like an End Timer—I'm crazy, but I'm not *that* crazy. Maybe I should add a subtitle for the cover—something along the lines of "*Don't Panic*" from the cover of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Cut me some slack—I'm in a tough situation. If all I did was prattle on about the beauty in the world (which there's a lot of—like *you*, for example), you'd probably think I was batshit crazy... or more batshit crazy. Rest assured I'm not as bad as Dwayne Hoover (Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*) ...at least I don't think I am. Doh!

terrible, heartbreaking tragedy of it all is we know it's killing us, but we're helpless to change it. "*We know, but we can't act.*" I've tried to get out of the sitting world (I call out the sitting jobs, but there are plenty of other jobs that are Bullshit Work too), but I wasn't able to escape—and I simply don't have the will to re-invent myself and there aren't any "jobs" I want to do.<sup>†</sup> I've opted out. If anyone can understand me it must be Ignatious Reilly or Bartleby.

"I prefer not to."

—Herman Melville *Bartleby the Scrivener*

I won't go into the joy of being constantly "on" and "in touch" through "*smart*" devices. I could also mention the wo(man) *race*, the virtual wo(man) race, and the *speed* of life, but we don't have time for that.<sup>‡</sup> Time is money and I'm running out of both.

Why am I prattling on about all of this? I guess I'm just trying to share some of the incessant noise—the *madness* rattling around in my mind. I shouldn't let matters I have no control over upset me so much. "*Put up, shut up, or do something about it.*" I've tried the first and third options and I've finally chosen to shut up—shut up, get out of the way completely, and let everyone get on with enjoying this sweet cesspool. I've always struggled with social norms while living in them. I can't fit in or get out. I am... an imposter... a distant observer. I'm *not special* or the *only one* who feels this way. I don't say these things with pride, delusions of self-importance, or self-pity. It's just how I feel—obviously not affiliated with logic. I've tried changing myself with little to no success. I've tried to accept the outer and inner world for what it is instead of what I expect or want it to be. Suffice it to say, I just can't filter the noise anymore.

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<sup>†</sup> Ah, to be a "productive member of society." I think we may have gone wrong as a species when some wo(man)being decided we needed to exchange currency instead of trading our efforts directly. I think the Native American tribes really had a good thing going until we annihilated them. I guess we never would have been able to enjoy our iphones if that had been allowed to continue? Hmm. I believe it's possible to grow technology responsibly. I guess we'll never know.

<sup>‡</sup> Seriously though—it's completely fucking nuts. The constant connectivity... I can't process it anymore. Of course, *I have a choice*, but blanket statements like that trivialize the complications that I don't have time to go into.

I wanna change the world, but I don't have enough time.  
I wanna turn you round, but you're too damn stubborn.  
I wanna change the way I feel, but I just can't do it.  
Oh, I want a lot.

—Todd Streicher, *Blue Ruin*, *Wanna Be*

There's no earthly way of knowing  
Which direction we are going  
There's no knowing where we're rowing  
Or which way the river's flowing  
Is it raining? Is it snowing?  
Is a hurricane a-blowing?  
Not a speck of light is showing  
So the danger must be growing  
Are the fires of hell a-glowing?  
Is the grisly reaper mowing?  
Yes, the danger must be growing  
'Cause the rowers keep on rowing  
And they're certainly not showing  
Any signs that they are slowing.

—Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka*

And so what? Big Deal.<sup>†</sup> *Poor Peter*—no one understands him... all he can do is languish in his desperate misery and self-pity. I've already tried slapping myself (and worse) but it didn't work. It's a difficult situation, but take full responsibility. I've created and accepted my fate—I hope you can too.

I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself  
A small bird will drop frozen from a bough  
without ever having felt sorry for itself.

—D.H. Lawrence *Self-Pity*

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<sup>†</sup> Andy Warhol said "Sometimes people let the same problem make them miserable for years when they could just say, **So what?** That's one of my favorite things to say. **So what?**" I understand... I feel the same contempt and intolerance toward my idiotic conundrums.

While we're on the subject of birds... I'd like to insert a poem by John Lillison, England's greatest one-armed poet. It's called Pointy Birds:

O pointy birds.  
O pointy pointy,  
Anoint my head,  
Anointy-nointy

—John Lillison, *Pointy Birds and Other Pointy Creatures*<sup>†</sup>

Pointing out external factors is a lot easier than explaining the internal. It's nearly impossible to convey the internal (this is why so much of my work on this note has been edited out), but I'll try give you a more personal and heart felt answer to the *why*...

Try to imagine feeling like you're perpetually hanging from a ledge. Visualize crying—begging and pleading yourself— “*Why can't you pull yourself up?! What do you want?!!*” Imagine year after year of going (or trying) to sleep hoping you'll feel better tomorrow. Embrace physically hurting yourself just to feel *something*—to give yourself a “real” reason to feel bad... basically creating a physical manifestation of your inner pain. There you are, taking pharmaceutical brain candy—pills, trying anything to keep yourself above ground—only to discover sexual side effects that disrupt the one thing that you used to enjoy... You can think of nothing but the escape of letting go, but you don't want to let everyone down. You try to accept love, but you *can't* because how can you possibly, in good conscience enter a relationship when your internal life is a living hell and you feel your impending self-destruction is one hand slip away—the darkness below constantly beckoning you?

You're infinitely lonely, but hurting people and ruining relationships feels worse. You might end up sabotaging all of your relationships because of the guilt and shame this causes. You might seek to shelter those you love—distance yourself to make impending intimacy disconnections easier. “*You avoid those you love to protect them from your madness... but by avoiding them you hurt them and yourself by refusing their love for you.*<sup>‡</sup>” The worst part is you *can't* stop the cycle. You're just dying—rotting from the inside. There's no escaping your inner life. You have no meaning, hope, or compass of your own so everything you do is rooted in codependency—which breeds resent-

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<sup>†</sup> From Steve Martin's *The Man With Two Brains*. If you don't think that movie is funny, there's something seriously wrong with you. If you haven't seen it, you need to. Do it.

<sup>‡</sup> Adapted from dialog in the film, *The Science of Sleep*—a beautiful love story.

ment. You try to fight the codependency by starving it, but it's rooted so deep that this also starves the host. Of all the things wo(man)beings have in common, the most personal, profound, and tragic is our isolation. We spend our lives striving to make connections to ourselves and others.

*A family? A child?* All of these things are unthinkable for someone in my position. How can I take care of a family or a child when I can't even take care of or control *myself*? It's a never-ending cycle of shame—feeling a burden and or disconnected that fuels my madness. It comes and goes at will and pays no attention to logic and faculty. Constant management brings tired (or in my case, completely exhausted) faculty.

When you careen through the world with feeling utterly disconnected, you begin to splinter and lose your integrity. Soon, pieces start tearing off and disappear—until finally, you realize you're invisible. You're a ghost whose hand passes through everything. OK... Wow.—How ridiculously histrionic. † I have to stop and laugh at myself.....OK. Now, where were we?

It's very difficult to accept that you're mentally ill. You feel weak, vulnerable, inferior, and like you're a problem that can't be solved. You want to run and run and blame yourself for not being strong enough to cope or *get better*. You feel like everything you do causes the people around you pain—you feel like a demolition man... a toxic agent of destruction. The Destroyer Part takes over. And so on...

*Sigh...* I've tried to give you a glimpse of my jumbled thoughts and feelings. Brain Candy (hilarious movie BTW) doesn't change what you know or how you think (unless they're illicit or you take mass quantities). It just puts a fresh coat of paint over all of it. After awhile the mold and mildew finds its way to the surface—it always does. From my point of view, my attempt to explain the *why* is a completely trite and abysmal failure—but what I think doesn't matter... You can't say I didn't try.‡

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† Funny story that may shed light on my anxieties and negative nature: My dad tells stories of travelling to the cabin when I was a boy. I was apparently obsessed with the idea we were going to run out of gas. No amount pointing at the gas gauge or adult reasoning could console me.

‡ Well... you can, but you need to realize I did my best to take a random sampling of my thoughts and feelings. Keep in mind, I'm not trying nor would I ever try to tell you what to think or feel. My only goal is to try to explain why I had to leave.

I've never been very good at life, but I gave it my best. I have never pretended to know who your inner self or what you're going through, so I hope you will do the same for me. Please don't judge me harshly, but if calling me *crazy*, weak, and selfish helps maintain your grip on sanity, then let me be the weakest, craziest, most maladjusted wo(man)being to ever walk the face of the earth.

There's nothing wrong with having a one track mind—it helps keep you going straight.

—Peter Streicher Narrator, *Suicide King*<sup>2004</sup>

“..life is but a dream.” Will I wake up? Will there be another boat for me to row?

Row row row your boat  
gently down the stream  
merrily merrily merrily  
life is but a dream.

—Eliphalet Oram Lyte<sup>†</sup>

In summation: The *why* doesn't matter. It doesn't change what *is* in the *here and now*. What good will come of my death? I don't know. What bad will come from it? I don't know. In all probability, good and bad will come from it. Yes? Isn't that what *they* always say? “*Every cloud has a silver lining and everything happens for a reason.*” If you believe these notions, I would say my death can't be excluded.

Now, now my good man, this  
is no time for making enemies.

—Voltaire, *on his deathbed, in response to a priest asking that he renounce Satan*

ETC.<sup>‡</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> Credited to him, but cannot be verified. First published: The Franklin Square Song Collection, 1881, New York.

<sup>‡</sup> An illustration shamelessly stolen from Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*

## DON'T THINK TOO MUCH

I was told by İlhami Atalay<sup>†</sup> on several occasions: “*Don’t think too much—I’ll have to take you to the hospital and I don’t have time for that.*” I couldn’t agree more. *Thinking* rarely comes to any good. It seems to be a catalyst for madness. Can a person think themselves to death? Maybe this is what I’ve done? This is not to say my thinking makes sense to anyone but me. Like SMOG says “*It may be crazy, but I’m the closest thing I have—to a voice of reason.*” We’re all dying. Many of us are killing ourselves in one way or another. Some people drink, eat, smoke, etc., themselves to death. Some of us die from “*natural causes.*” What the hell does that mean anyway? As we know from the food industry, anything can be labelled natural. It’s *all* a matter of perspective.<sup>‡</sup> Is death by suicide not a “natural” cause? My grandfather always said, “*you gotta die of something!*” Who can argue with that?

You can live to be a hundred if you give up all the things that  
make you want to live to be a hundred.

—Woody Allen

I’ve *thought* about being committed. Who’s going to pay for it? Would you come visit me? I’d only pretend I was fine when I saw you<sup>§</sup> because I’d be so disgusted and fed up with myself I’d need to downplay the acuteness of my pain—even to therapists. Besides, once inside the asylum, I’d be on suicide watch forever and I’m far too spoiled to eat institutional food for the rest of my life. I choose quality over quantity. I’d rather have one stupendous last meal than 30 years of bad food. I’ve decided it’s best for all involved to avoid a path that leads to more misery. I feel like I have talked it all to death (literally, I guess)—do you honestly think *I* don’t know how ridiculous I am—or this is? I don’t need to be on suicide watch. There’s been enough watching and waiting. What will I find in an institution? (BTW—do people *get* institutionalized anymore?) Will it help me find *God*?” I don’t need to find God. *We* are God. *Everything* is God—you, me, that woman’s purse, the “evil-est” think you can think of, and so on. God is a terrible word—horrible really. So loaded and overused it’s practically meaningless.

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<sup>†</sup> İlhami Atalay is a renowned artist who lives and works in İstanbul Turki. A wise, caring, and giving man of tremendous faith who allowed me to work with him in his studio.

<sup>‡</sup> Whether you like it or not, it’s still a good point.

<sup>§</sup> Much the same way I do now—most of the time.

Life *takes* life. This appetite can, and never will be satiated. Like a mobius, the cycle can never begin or end. There is no consequence except what we make in our minds. It also holds no consequence in what may be after this life on earth. If there is something after this, it's completely beyond anything any wo(man)being has ever imagined.

*wait... there were good things too!*

This is *really* important and I don't know where else to put it so it's going here (I told you this document was going to be a mess):

This is just as a good a place as any to insert some positive thoughts that I hope won't be overlooked. *Of course!* there were good things—all of you are a gigantic example! Too many good things to list. This letter is focused on my struggles because I'm trying to “explain” my departure. I don't want to leave you without thanking you for being a part of my life. I'll keep saying it: I couldn't have made it this far without you. If you're reading this, I have to assume you knew me in some capacity. You know what we shared and I'm sure you're thinking about it now. It was good—probably good and bad, but I hope the good outweighed the bad. Um... I hope you're thinking about the good, that is.

I don't like the fact that this note makes it sound as if I didn't enjoy any aspect of my life. I assure you this isn't the case! Here's a thought I came across and I think it's pretty good: *Be kind. Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about* (it reminded me of the poem *Richard Cory*) I'm thankful to all of you for the good times we shared, but I hope you realize the part of my life you saw was quite small. I encourage you to take a moment to think about how much time you actually spend with the people you know.

*There were good things. Yes.*

## EARTH AND BEYOND THE INFINITE †

I imagine someone might say dying at 44 is too young. Our perceptions of time are as irrelevant as the word “*fair*.” How long we’re here isn’t important. If you believe everything happens for a reason then my death is no exception. What or *if* that reason *is*... I don’t know. We will all find out, ‡ but when we do, I guess it will seem normal—like there’s no questioning it. Much like being in a dream... we accept what would normally be impossible. Maybe “*the answer to life the universe and everything*” really is 42 —I’m bringing a towel just in case it is §.

I believe our universe is infinitely more than we can possibly imagine. ¶ The amount of order is mind boggling, and it’s entirely possible that chaos is merely an illusion created by our limited ability to understand. Our small minds can’t possibly comprehend all the variables of any given situation, but that doesn’t mean they exist or can’t/won’t be discovered. If anything in the universe is predictable, *everything* is. \*\* Effortless flow and effortless perfection. What *is*—*is* in absolute order. Maybe freewill exists only in our minds? Maybe there is such a thing as “destiny?” It seems entirely possible that freewill exists only in our minds because we don’t know all the variables. This lack of knowledge creates the perception of freewill—which in our limited capacity is as good as the real thing. I guess I’m trying to say that it’s *possible* there is a (for lack of a better word) “plan,” and everything is always on schedule. Possible, right? It’s also equally possible that, “*It’s all a big nothing.*” ...*Nothing* is strange concept... It’s impossible for wo(man)beings to imagine (not even in a billion years) “*nothing.*” Nothing is everything.

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† A shameless re-purposing of a film section title in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The film section title reads: Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite. The titling begins the sequence when David Bowman enters the “stargate” and begins his journey through space and time toward an unknown place. This point of the film is where most viewers fall asleep. When he arrives, he begins an endless loop of birth and death. By the end of the film he is reborn as the “Star Child” looking over Earth. I will apologize to Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke (when or if I meet them) if they’re offended by my re-purposing and the association.  
—<sup>2</sup>This footnote also warns of your possible boredom and what you might consider batshit craziness of what follows.

‡ Or not. Regardless it might not matter... but everything probably matters. *It certainly exists, right?*

§ *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* reference

¶ Who knows... planets could be cosmic eggs—comets could be cosmic sperm. Everything is equal and there’s no such thing a “nothing.” Anything’s possible, right?

\*\* Tired of footnotes? I actually find them very useful and mildly entertaining. They’re connected to the text and yet they’re not—kind of like the human brain and it’s mind.

I also believe that what we do while we're alive has no effect on what happens to us (if anything) when we die. The Universe—even the infinitesimally small piece we see, is entirely too huge to acknowledge or hold us accountable<sup>†</sup> for our actions. Let's not flatter ourselves—it's terribly egocentric to think our actions and our notions of cause and effect have anything to do with "*The Grand Scheme of Things*." The onus is on us as individuals to *make* things *matter* and figure out what's *important*, but some of us can't.

So... after all that blather, you might wonder: why, if I believe the concepts above, would I chose to die by suicide. The answer is simple: The connection between what you *know*, *think*, or *believe* and what you *feel* is tenuous at best. I think I'm also trying to show you I'm not afraid of what, if anything, is next. If there is something, I'm pretty sure it isn't built on or limited to the dualities humans are so fond of.<sup>‡</sup>

Bored yet? Yes... *I know I am*—I get terribly bored with myself so I can imagine what you're going through. *Information Burn* sets in... Enough pontificating and sophomoric philosophizing! Read my notebooks or poetry if you haven't had your fill of this sort of rot. We've got to keep moving. "*So little to do and so much time—wait, reverse it.*" *Onward*—You're almost there!

"I am now about to make the great adventure."

—suicide note of Clara Blandick

Clara played Auntie Em in *The Wizard of Oz*

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<sup>†</sup> Accountability is a human construct. We're very good at judging and some seem to relish it.

<sup>‡</sup> Just to be clear: I consider myself somewhat spiritual but I'm definitely not religious. Most religions have something good going for them eventhough (yes... eventhough should be one word) they're generally dualistic and relish dividing things into "good" and "bad." Take Jesus for example, Whether he existed or not, he's a pretty great role model—Too bad so many self-proclaimed "Christians" can't bring themselves to truly embrace and actualize his teachings. Sorry I keep picking on Christians. They're no better or worse in regard to their devotion and observance to their beliefs than any other religion. I guess I pick on them because their prevalence in the government of the USA—a country founded on 'the separation of church and state.' Um... yeah.

## FINAL REQUESTS

Do I get any *final requests*? I probably don't deserve any, but I will make a few nonetheless. It seems like part of the routine. I realize *if* there is nothing after death, I won't know and it won't matter to me whether they are fulfilled or not. They say this sort of thing is more for the living anyway... Or you can look at fulfilling my requests as a last gift to me? Speaking of gifts—I'm guessing my intent to be an organ donor failed, but in the off chance some part of my body was recoverable, I hope the people who receive the gift(s) make better use of them than I did.

I should also make it clear that I don't want these requests to be a burden or make anyone feel guilty if they're deemed absurd or logistically impossible. They're requests... nothing more.

**Wait... I do insist on a the items in this paragraph:** This is difficult to make clear (even lawyers fight over this crap), and unfortunately, I had to do this on my own. I wasn't able to have a living will (or any legal documents for that matter) drawn up because it's annoying, very time consuming, and worse—everyone involved would have had to sign the documents. This would have raised suspicion and made it impossible for me to maintain my autonomy and fulfill my plans. Hopefully my intent will be understood. **I hereby grant power of attorney** (in the unlikely event that I survive) **and leave my entire estate to my ex-wife, Jennifer Sue Green. I hereby name my brother Todd Streicher as Executor of my Estate.** This may not be legally binding, but it's my wish. I hope it's workable. I've digitally signed these PDFs and left signed printed copies.

**My first request:** PLEASE—NO FUNERAL HOMES! I hated them when I was alive and I certainly don't want you or my dead body to spend anymore time in one. If there is a visitation of some kind, please hold it at someone's house or other space. If a "church" is part of the mix, please choose a unitarian—maybe the First Unitarian Society of Madison (I'm not a member). And please don't have a pastor, reverend, minister, etc., who doesn't know me "lead a mass" (or whatever you choose to call it)—I've never understood why people have a person who doesn't know doodly-squat about "the deceased" blather on about a person they barely (if at all) knew. If none of my friends or family are able to speak, then I would prefer silence. And for everyone's sake, play some good music. No embalming please. Since a funeral

pyre and or leaving a body in the woods to decompose naturally is illegal, I guess my choice would be green burial at Natural Path Sanctuary near Madison. The cost when I last checked was \$1000 for burial but the person was required to be a member of Farley Center which cost \$2500. I think there should be enough “estate” money to cover this expense. [www.farleycenter.org](http://www.farleycenter.org) [www.naturalpathsanctuary.org](http://www.naturalpathsanctuary.org)

**My second request:** If there is any money left after settling my estate,<sup>†</sup> maybe someone could organize a fantastic party (maybe a Hat Party) for my friends, family, friends of friends, and friends of family. It doesn’t even have to be in my honor—I mean that sounds silly. Just celebrate your lives. Celebrate the fact that you’re still fighting and be thankful you feel you have something inside yourself to fight for. Enjoy feeling lucky to be alive. Be thankful for feeling something I couldn’t. Some cultures celebrate a loved one’s death with parties that can go on for days (much preferable, in my opinion, to the morbid rituals Americans subscribe to). I realize most people don’t have the time for that sort of thing (it’s just not how things are done *here*... we’re far too busy for such folly—which reminds me of the *Fast Funerals* sketch comedy concept Jenny and I came up with. Maybe she’ll tell you about it), but maybe one day—or one evening? I will attend if I can.

**My third request:** I have some *intellectual property*<sup>‡</sup> and a relatively small footprint of *stuff*.<sup>§</sup> Again, my entire estate goes to Jenny S. Green. She will decide what to do with it. That said, I have suggested that she share my estate with family, friends and charity.

**My fourth request:** I have been sponsoring a child named Idrissa Sawadogo in Burkina Faso through Childreach. Will someone please take over for me until he’s too old to be part of the program? The cost is \$30/month.

**My fifth request:** If someone could inform the people closest to me, I would appreciate it. I planned to send one final alwaysland photo broadcast that would include a PDF of this note to save some of the hassle of informing people and avoid rumors. If

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<sup>†</sup> Estate... it sounds so important. My *vast* estate is more of a burden than anything.

<sup>‡</sup> I first heard this label from my brother Todd. It makes me grin every time I utter or think of it. These items would probably include my writing, photography, art, etc.. digital or otherwise. Sooo important. Yes?

<sup>§</sup> Stuff—as in all the junk a person buys or acquires. I feel I’ve done a pretty good job keeping clutter down to a minimum, but it will be up to those who sort through it to judge.

I managed to send it out, great. If not I'd like someone to send a message. The alwaysland photo broadcast list covers most of the people who might be interested. Perhaps someone could follow up on my gmail account to make sure the emails I scheduled with Boomerang were delivered. Any phone numbers would be in my iPhone. I will leave all passwords to accounts and devices with Jenny and Todd.

**My Sixth Request:** I authorize the therapists who have helped me make it this far to release any and all information regarding my case to my family and friends. My suicide is absolutely no reflection of their abilities. I wouldn't have made it this far without them and I can't recommend them enough to everyone in need of a therapist. I'm not implying anyone would or should want to talk to them. I just want to make it clear they have my permission to share insight and information about me.

**My Seventh Request:** My Condo... Ugh... talk about a horrible burden to leave behind. I don't know what to say about this. I have no idea if a profit can be made by putting it back together and selling it. I'm really sorry I've left it partially finished.

**My Eighth Request:** Read: Kurt Vonnegut *Breakfast of Champions*, John Kennedy Toole *Confederacy of Dunces*, Douglas Adams *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, George Saunders *Civilwarland in Bad Decline*.

Watch: Werner Herzog's *Stroszek* and *Fitzcaraldo*, Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man*, The restored version of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, Kids in the Hall's *Brain Candy*. OK... I'll stop now. If you've already read these books or seen these films, read and watch them again.

**My Ninth Request:** Treat yourself to your favorite dessert. "*I tell you, we are here on Earth to fart around, and don't let anybody tell you any different.*" —Kurt Vonnegut

I have done my best to wrap up my affairs (closing accounts, etc.) I have laid out relevant documents and information at my condo in the hope of making this task easier. I'm sorry for the things I may have overlooked...

## EPILOGUE

Nobody gets to say goodbye or try to talk me out of it. I consider my entire life one long goodbye. It's not until now that we part ways. After rereading this ridiculous note (for the hundredth time), I realize it may seem as though I'm seeking approval for my actions. I can't hope for your approval, but I *do* hope for some kind of understanding for an action you may personally find inexcusable. There's actually a part of me that hopes you *don't* understand. If you truly understood, you would feel the same way I do and I certainly don't wish that on anyone. Maybe 'understand' is the wrong word... Is compassion better? As I mentioned before, wo(man)beings can justify *anything*—why should I be excluded? Please note, my attempts at humor and good natured sarcasm have been sprinkled throughout this document with love and are not intended to make you feel as though I regard your love, concern, and potential mourning for me as trivial. I'm incredibly thankful to you all. I hope you can see that my gratitude and my final action aren't connected in any way. This note could never convey how horribly painful reaching this decision was for me—or how sorry I am. I can only leave you with my love.

A little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men.  
—Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka*

I've included humor as a way of communicating that I really have accepted my choice—that doesn't mean I'm not afraid, haven't wavered, or struggled with self-doubt. Only a madman—or someone who is double-batshit crazy wouldn't be afraid... and self-doubt is a permanent fixture inside all of us. I'm sorry if this note causes more pain. I've always seen my ability to laugh as one of my better traits, yes? If one can't laugh at herisself... what have they got?

God is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh.  
—Voltaire

I love *all* of my friends and family—you and this world are so of beauty... we exist in a universe that is as *wonderful* as it is *horrible* (we all contribute to both)—it's perfection *is* and *will* be enough to crush anyone. Can you try to view my death as a release from suffering? Is age so important? I've done most everything I wanted to do.

That probably sounds impossible, but believe me, I've had more than my fill. Haven't I done enough? Seriously, I feel like I've had a very full life. Some may think I've gone *crazy* (well, I am crazy... I guess I mean *more* crazy). Ursula K. LeGuin said it best: "*What sane person could live in this world and not be crazy?*". Is it possible I've gone *sane* or at least on my way there? Depending on your perspective, this quote might be in order:

Take warning from the misfortune of others, so that  
others need not have to take warning from your own.  
—Saadi, *Rose Garden*, 13th Century

I genuinely believe (in my heart of hearts) that we all do the best we can. All things being equal, I could be you—you could be me. It's hard to hold this thought when our emotions and memories consume us. No one is responsible for my actions but me. I hope this note will be at least a small part of the healing process. Perhaps we will meet again. Maybe we will have a peanut butter malt (or whatever you like<sup>†</sup>) and laugh about anyeverything that ever was, is, and will be. The cosmos awaits!—I wish you Bon Voyage when your time comes, but for now, Live!

Thank you all for being who you are  
Thank you for being part of my life  
May you be filled with love and kindness  
May you be well  
May you be peaceful and at ease  
May you be happy

**Fond Adieu, Fond of You, Fondue.**



—Peter Streicher

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<sup>†</sup> In *Rudolf, the Red-Nosed Reindeer* Herbie, Yukon Cornelius, and Ruldolph are on an ice flow heading toward dense fog. Yukon Cornelius says, "The fog's as thick as peanut butter!" Herbie replies tentatively, "You mean pea soup." Yukon bellows "You eat what you like and I'll eat what I like!" —what a wonderful lesson.

## REFERENCE:

Visit [alwaysland.com](http://alwaysland.com) for a few of my poems, but I've also included the words of a few great minds. I hope they will forgive the intrusion and or the association. Normally I wouldn't let anyone speak for me, but I decided I needed all the help I could get.

## SINCE FEELING IS FIRST

—e. e. cummings

since feeling is first  
who pays any attention  
to the syntax of things  
will never wholly kiss you;

wholly to be a fool  
while Spring is in the world

my blood approves,  
and kisses are a better fate  
than wisdom  
lady i swear by all flowers. Don't cry  
the best gesture of my brain is less than  
your eyelids' flutter which says

we are for each other; then  
laugh, leaning back in my arms  
for life's not a paragraph

And death i think is no parenthesis

∞

# THE GENIUS OF THE CROWD

—Charles Bukowski

there is enough treachery, hatred violence absurdity in the average  
human being to supply any given army on any given day

and the best at murder are those who preach against it  
and the best at hate are those who preach love  
and the best at war finally are those who preach peace

those who preach god, need god  
those who preach peace do not have peace  
those who preach peace do not have love

beware the preachers  
beware the knowers  
beware those who are always reading books  
beware those who either detest poverty  
or are proud of it  
beware those quick to praise  
for they need praise in return  
beware those who are quick to censor  
they are afraid of what they do not know  
beware those who seek constant crowds for  
they are nothing alone  
beware the average man the average woman  
beware their love, their love is average  
seeks average

but there is genius in their hatred  
there is enough genius in their hatred to kill you  
to kill anybody  
not wanting solitude  
not understanding solitude  
they will attempt to destroy anything

that differs from their own  
not being able to create art  
they will not understand art  
they will consider their failure as creators  
only as a failure of the world  
not being able to love fully  
they will believe your love incomplete  
and then they will hate you  
and their hatred will be perfect

like a shining diamond  
like a knife  
like a mountain  
like a tiger  
like hemlock

their finest art

∞

# RICHARD CORY

—Edwin Arlington Robinson

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

∞

## AND DEATH SHALL HAVE NO DOMINION

—Dylan Thomas

And death shall have no dominion.  
Dead men naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon;  
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea  
They lying long shall not die windily;  
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,  
And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan't crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Though they be mad and dead as nails,  
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,  
And death shall have no dominion.

∞

# THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK

—T.S. Eliot

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo. ◇*

◇ translation appears at the end

LET us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats 5  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question ... 10  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes, 15  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap, 20  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes; 25  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate; 30  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go 35  
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair— 40  
[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—  
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]  
Do I dare 45  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:—  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, 50  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all— 55  
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
 Then how should I begin  
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? 60  
     And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
 Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
 [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]  
 It is perfume from a dress 65  
 That makes me so digress?  
 Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
     And should I then presume?  
     And how should I begin?  
     . . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets 70  
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.  
     . . . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully! 75  
 Smoothed by long fingers,  
 Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,  
 Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
 Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
 Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis? 80  
 But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
 Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon a platter,  
 I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
 I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker, 85  
 And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
 After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
 Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
 Would it have been worth while, 90  
 To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
 To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
 To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
 To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
 Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"— 95  
 If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
     Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.  
             That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
 Would it have been worth while, 100  
 After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  
 After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—  
 And this, and so much more?—  
 It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
 But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen: 105  
 Would it have been worth while  
 If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
 And turning toward the window, should say:  
     "That is not it at all,  
     That is not what I meant, at all."

. . . . . 110  
 No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
 Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
 To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
 Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
 Deferential, glad to be of use, 115  
 Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
 Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
 At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
 Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ... 120  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me. 125

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown 130  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

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◇ This epigraph is written in Italian and is taken from Dante's *The Divine Comedy*:

*If I believed that my response was heard  
By anyone returning to the world,  
this flame would stand and never stir again,  
But since no man has ever come alive  
out of this gulf of Hell, if I hear true,  
I'll answer, with no fear of infamy.*

The speaker is Guido da Montefeltro, whose spirit Dante encounters during his descent into hell. Since Guido assumes that Dante is also dead and therefore cannot return to the world, he is willing to confide in Dante his sin of false counsel, for which he is punished by being encased in flame.

The epigraph suggests that Prufrock is speaking from a private hell from which he cannot escape. (The image of inhabiting the depths — the pit of hell, the bottom of the sea — is a dominant one throughout this “Love Song.”) The epigraph also sets the confessional tone of the poem.

# I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS

—Maya Angelou

The free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wings  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with fearful trill  
of the things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
an the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

∞

**The Dalai Lama**, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered:  
*“Man.... Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices  
money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does  
not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he  
lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived.”*

Note: Lest anyone take offense (people are easily offended): when The Dalai Lama  
says “Man” and “he” I’m quite certain he’s referring to everyanyall wo(man)beings.

## Freedom in an unjust system is no freedom at all...

“If freedom, democracy and self rule are the fundamental values that a government is based on, then why should people give up these rights when they enter their workplace? In politics we fight like tigers for freedom, for the right to elect our leaders, for freedom of movement, choice of residence, choice of what work to pursue— control of our lives, in short. And then we wake up in the morning and go to work, and all those rights disappear. We no longer insist on them. And so for most of the day we return to feudalism. This is what capitalism is— a version of feudalism in which capital replaces land, and business leaders replace kings. But the hierarchy remains. And so we still hand over our lives’ labor, under duress, to feed rulers who do no real work.”

“Business leaders work, and they take the financial risks—”

“The so-called risk of the capitalist is merely one of the privileges of capital.”

“Management—”

“Yes, yes. Don’t interrupt me. Management is a real thing, a technical matter. It can be controlled by labor just as well as by capital. Capital itself is simply the useful residue of the work of past laborers, and it could belong to everyone as well as the few. There is no reason why a tiny nobility should own the capital, and everyone else therefore be in service to them. There is no reason they should give us a living wage and take all the rest that we produce. No! The system called capitalist democracy is not really democratic at all. That is why it has turned in to a meta-national system, in which democracy grows ever weaker and capitalism grows ever stronger. In which one percent of the population owns half of the wealth, and five percent of the population owns ninety-five percent of the wealth. The current state of affairs shows which values are real in this system. And the sad thing is that the injustice and suffering caused by it, is not at all necessary, in that the technical means have existed since the eighteenth century to provide the basics of life to all.”

—adapted from the book **Blue Mars** by **Kim Stanley Robinson**

*My death is **nobody's** fault but my own.*

*There's **nothing** anyone could have,  
might have, or should have  
done to stop it.*

*There's no way **anyone** could have,  
or should have known it was  
going to happen.*