

They took a walk together the night before he left, both of them nervous about the length of time he would be gone. She revealed to him her fear that he would be taken from her, because he was good to her, and that to have him for a lifetime sometimes seemed too good to be true. He knew he kept many secrets from her and so he told her—I'm not too good to be true.

It was around dusk the night he landed in Oakland that it dawned on him, he was going to be facing some trouble. He got in his rental car, a Nissan Kick, and started driving toward Redwood City. The sky over the bay was smeared with every shade of scarlet, purple, orange. Billowing in the distance at the point where the sky touches the sea, the densest fog. Two planes cruised at low altitude, their black silhouettes against a painted canvas. More black silhouettes, birds, these much closer.

He sat in his room after he checked in and tried to gather his scattered thoughts. His plan was to head out into the black highway night which would lead him into San Francisco. He wrote a prayer in his journal—Help me to remember that there is no rush, only beautiful poetic motion.

The next two days would be challenging for no clear reason. It was the unclarity of it that would be the worst part. What it pushed him to were a handful of realizations that he didn't figure he would've come to otherwise.

He was sitting in Lily's basement on 33rd street, several blocks from the infinite cold Pacific, when he had to accept that if he was getting sick, which he did not want to even consider, he would have to do the unthinkable. He would have to wake up and text Lily and Jakob right away and tell them it turns out he's not feeling well, which would be a real bust, but the worst part of it is that he held Zen—he *asked* to hold Zen—and he would be worried that perhaps he passed germs to her. He would have to tell them he had no idea, that he assumed he was merely exhausted and that there had been absolutely no real indication other than feeling dehydrated that he wasn't well. He had anxiety already, so that clouds everything. It can be hard to know where the lines between spiritual, mental, and physical are when you have the anxiety. And of course, part of anxiety is asking the question—what if this isn't anxiety?

But in addition to telling them this inconvenient and embarrassing truth and basically having to quarantine in their basement for the next two days, he would have to figure out the rest of the week. Not fun. And not a mystery he had any desire to solve. And what if it got *worse*?

Just then Booboo the cat, who had been prowling to and fro, jumped authoritatively into his lap.

He wanted to *be here—now*—in San Francisco. He wanted to rediscover the poetry of life, which for whatever reason had started to become a little stale. Blame age, cynicism, the neverending question of money, lack of fulfillment, who knows. But he had spent the last few weeks mustering the anticipation of this trip as a sort of hail mary. He needed this trip to be certain things. He needed it to be inspiring. But he was two days in, trying to figure out how to accept the fact he was *not* catching a vibe. He was so dehydrated he couldn't risk drinking alcohol. So he was boringly sober. He had bought cigarettes. Couldn't risk smoking those either or else he felt like his throat would close it was so dry. And his head felt heavy as a sack of rocks. He felt like he wasn't all the way in his body and

therefore not capable of being all the way present. His mood was off, his thoughts were hard to control, and the anxiety was not leaving. It seemed lodged inside of him.

Booboo was purring thunderously in his lap.

He was constantly afraid that something bad was about to happen. The anxiety that had collected inside of him was impressively efficient at attaching itself to whatever crisis, however brief, was at hand. There was nothing original in this, but as is well-known, anxiety tricks its victims into thinking their struggle is unique. It helped him to remember—we as humans survive almost everything. In fact, we survive all but one thing.

Maybe suffering is intended. Can't rule that out. Can you bless these feelings? Can you bless the despair? Can you bless the waves even as they collapse upon you and make you lose your balance? Whether the answer is yes or no, just keep the pen moving. And if you don't have any herbs with you, remember that the Chinese use hot water as medicine.

He was really talking with himself now. Stop pussyfooting around with what you need to do. To write anything good is to walk in the land of the dead. We get preoccupied with the pleasure centers of the brain. Need dopamine, etc.

I am trying to move a mountain when I need to just let God move me.

Why do I desire the most intense versions of things? Why do I desire the most intense version of Heaven? And what if these desires backfire? To think that you could at any moment become a villain.

You had to get the spiritual insights in first and then you could get to the art. And there won't be these clear boundaries. No walls dividing these dimensions. With wisdom eye you will see.

If you stay present, you keep moving because Time is moving. So be still, and you will be surprised at your movement.

Don't look for anything for yourself. Look for it for others.

Look for the center at all the edges.

One way to put it is that hell is a permanent state of panic, so panic attacks feel like confirmations of the reality of hell, or a state of panic you can get stuck in.

He loved his wife so much, it broke his heart to hide from her. But when he masturbated, he still thought about the prostitutes he'd been with many years before. Sexual experiences now canonized in his mind, emblazoned into his brain cells, stamped on his soul (shall we go that far?)—he returned so viscerally to those orgasms again and again. He would sit on the toilet in their downstairs bathroom and timetravel to his greatest sins. As soon as he finished he would sit motionless to make sure he didn't hear her coming down the stairs, then he would quickly tear off a long piece of toilet paper and wipe the cum from his stomach, his penis, his balls if necessary, his fingers, the toilet seat and the floor if there were any stray drops, and then he would flush the evidence to oblivion and tuck his remaining erection into the elastic band of his boxers and let his T-shirt fall over it to conceal any indication of it, then he would wash his hands of the cum but not of the memories.

It's hard to light cigarettes in San Francisco it's so windy. He leaned into the doorway of an abandoned building and tried to block the wind enough to get a good flame. He was failing when he

spotted a bookstore across the street, so giving up on the cigarette, he crossed the street and went in. Anarchist zines. Bat chain pullers.

He felt his body was telling him that healthy eating was no longer optional but essential. Cook with delicious oils. Vegetables that grow in the dirt. He began to think that the changes we go through as we get older, if we let ourselves go through them gracefully, make us more fully alive.

When Booboo the cat leaped into his lap, he thought of his mother. She loved cats, and when he thought about her with her cats, he felt a sadness. Because she no longer has cats, and he didn't know why. He wasn't close enough to her to know the reason why. And they were both getting older. It's foolish for us to not be close, he thought. When the last cat died, he hadn't so much as sent her a sympathy card. He'd barely offered his condolences. Many considered him a kind soul, but to his mother he had not given the best of himself. Perhaps that was one of the roots of his discomfort.

The wedding was in Redwood City, and it proved to be its own microcosm of difficulty. It was a terribly long Saturday start to finish. 10am ironing his shirt all the way to 1am dropping the gear off at the warehouse. He wasn't surprised that he felt like a zombie afterwards, but he *was* surprised when he felt even worse the next day. He hadn't consumed any alcohol, so why'd he feel this way?

Aside from going, or attempting to go, to R&B and Ribs on Sunday and having a shot of tequila and a watery tequila soda, he was doing everything he knew how to do to feel better. He was eating fruits and vegetables, drinking bottles coconut water, reading his Bible, and trying to get some of that *good* sleep. He would try to find echinacea tomorrow if he wasn't feeling better. When and what would he tell Lily and Jakob? It was all a mystery.

Booboo the cat had leaped onto the bed after trying to leap again into his lap from which he'd been exiled. He tried to avoid this from happening which resulting in him scratching his leg.

The reason I shower every night is I don't like to itch. I don't like to lay in bed and itch.

(By allowing time in a piece of writing to oscillate from past tense to present tense, you add to the edginess of it.)

O the things within us that shift in the night as we sleep and dream. He woke up at 8:08am and breathed out an amen. His alcoholless dreams were always the most vivid. This one evades me, the one I was in immediately prior to awakening. The only specific thing I remember is that *Numb* by Linkin Park started playing while someone was swinging a hammer, nailing a flyer for a show to a telephone pole, something I've done more times than I can count, but not with hammer and nails, usually with a staple gun or with tape depending on the surface.

I hold my breath, hoping against everything that I'm feeling better than I did yesterday. Thank the Lord and everything within me!—I feel much better. (Maybe good health is the holy grail.)

I wish I could've been in better shape for R&B and Ribs. Slickwilled, I drove, and I'm glad I did. I considered taking an Uber, but that would've cost \$25 both ways. I ended up staying for only 45 minutes, so I would've regretted not driving if I hadn't. I'm limited to spending \$100/day. So far so good. The party was everything you'd want a party to be. Friendly people at the door, friendly

bartenders. Joie de vivre. Rapture. I walked in to the sound of a Kendrick edit that had everyone in a frenzy. The music was funneling from the back courtyard through a jam-packed audience into the bar where I ordered the tequila shot/tequila soda. I made my way shyly through the crowd to a corner of the patio where I could see the action. Photographers and videographers held their cameras high above their heads to capture the euphoria. The DJ wore a Detroit Tigers hat as he romanced the swirling vinyl. Hit after hit, edit after edit, with the briefest interludes of the best parts of forgotten songs (like Erick Sermon's *Just Like Music* which features the voice of Marvin Gaye). At the opposite corner of the courtyard, smoke was rising from a little screened-in shack where the ribs were being cooked. It would've taken 10 minutes to cross the courtyard, packed as it was, but I could enjoy the smell. Every demographic was present in the crowd, as was every tax bracket. But everyone sang *I Love You* by Faith Evans as one. And this crowd knew music! I couldn't believe how many people, young people, knew the words to *La-La Means I Love You* by The Delfonics. Clearly, the DJ was trying to say *I love you*.

—My brain needs something intense to latch on to, so the rest of it can be calm. Otherwise I'm gonna get fucked up about some dumb shit.

You are here. And no one can fuck with the fact you are here.

There it is—a whisp of the feeling—a delicate magic chill—so fragile it could evaporate with the shift in position of one singular element—but there it is nonetheless—the good ghostly chill up my spine indicating there is something good afoot. I could cry!

Sweet chill—I almost died chasing you. I almost lived a thousand times. And now I live! Now I live!

Tired and troubled, I drove through the financial district to Chinatown and miraculously found a parking spot across the street from City Lights and Visuvio. City Lights was closed but Visuvio was open and open wide. I went in and tried to find a portal through the shoulder-to-shoulder mass of humans before realizing I wanted a cigarette before a drink. So I doubled back toward the door. But I had no cigarettes, so I asked the door guy where I could buy some. He pointed over his shoulder to a sign 15 feet away that said SMOKE SHOP. I said thank you.

Now with a new pack of American Spirits and a little blue lighter (I started to buy black but remembered that a brighter color is easier to spot when I'm digging through clutter for a lighter) I was ready to again attempt to penetrate the mass of people inside Visuvio. I made my way to the innermost end of the bar where I ordered an old-fashioned then drifted upstairs. I found a little round table that wasn't more than 15 inches in diameter, wiped it with a napkin, then sat down and stirred my old-fashioned. I pulled Kerouac's *Old Angel Midnight* from my satchel and opened to the introduction.

But oh the anxiety that came over me. It was like my spirit could not distinguish up from down. I felt lonely, lost, and in a daze. I could not manage any reading. So I took out my notebook and pen and tried my best to record what I was experiencing.

Angels crawl back and forth, round about the old vicissitudes. A light-scare. Why the sometimes fear?

At times, all we can do is fit heartache into a meme. I am a meme. Here at Jack's old bar, reading, or at least trying to read, one of his books, as I'm sure so many failed writers have done.

I have come here looking for you. I feel and hear old music in the closeness. I remember there is a faded sign with Chinese characters on it down the street from my hotel. I don't need to be able to read Chinese to know it's a relaxation spa. Temptation will attempt me. It's a trap. I will not destabilize my soul on this trip, I cannot. I will persevere. My strength will be rooted in Christ and not my own will. The flesh may always resist prayer. But prayer is for us, not for God. God doesn't need us to pray. But we need to pray. I have been destroyed to the point of realizing that prayer is about seeing. Prayer is about what we see and how we see it. Sight: the superpower that no one talks about.

On the wall, lit up by a stained-glass lampshade, a portrait of James Joyce. A comforting sight. For a flashing second, the emptiness looked the other way. The thing no one talks about is that Joyce was traumatized by hell. You see it in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I wrote a few more lines in my journal but my body was telling me that I needed sleep. I curtseyed, then left.

Driving back to Redwood City, the queenessence of what I wanted to write came to me, merlying thru th' exhaustion into my foggy brain. I'd write it in real time on this trip, I thought. And it would serve as the prototype of what was to come eventually in the form of an apocalyptic novel. All I needed to require of myself was to be faithful and constant in writing for the next 10 days, channeling my experience of reality with a severity of exactitude that could not be denied. I needed also to allow a writing style to congeal around my ideas. My ideas were uncut diamonds, but my writing style was synthetic metal with a few streaks of gold.

Oh but the next day was a bust. Not only did I work for more than 13 hours by the time it was all said and done, but I got dehydrated in the process, didn't get to experience the fulfillment of DJing the actual dance party, and I got in an argument with Jessy that night because I took offense to a remark she made (she suggested that I wasn't being paid enough for the wedding and said it in a way that could be interpreted as—you shouldn't have said yes to this trip—you shouldn't even be out there right now—you made a mistake). I think I let her have too much power over my thoughts, not only because a husband shouldn't give his wife power over his thoughts, but also because I know she doesn't want that power. If it don't apply, let it fly, she says.

I woke up Sunday morning and shoveled a dozen wet pineapple chunks into my parched mouth, hoping to hydrate. I guzzled a coconut water, took 2 ginger shots, drank the rest of a Pedialyte, but damn, nothing was working. I still needed caffeine tho, so I went to a coffee shop inside a plant shop.

What if the test is resetting your intention, not to feeling good, but to making others feel good.

There is a certain category of the spiritually bent, he didn't know what to call them. Shamans? Prophets? Magicians? Whatever you want to call them, they tend to attract one another. You're more

likely to see them in action early in the morning than late at night, although there are the occasional exceptions. When they encounter their kind, they spin off into wild and intense conversations.

I walk into the coffee shop and hear one such conversation at its inception stage. The barista, a man in his thirties with a ponytail, is saying to an older couple on the other side of the espresso machine—Now that I’m not participating in the news cycle, I find that I’m not against anything. The lady does a little jig and looks at her husband and says—I like this kid.

Next thing I know, the barista, who appears to be a manager, or maybe even the owner of the shop, is pulling himself a shot of espresso and sitting down in a corner with the couple.

“I don’t wanna be a trauma dumpster,” he said. “That’s all relationships are.”

“[something about] 1970’s 1980’s self-help,” she said.

I used to be just like them, he thought. Now I’m so much more cynical. But I had my reasons for pulling away. When it came to this particular category of the spiritually bent, he’d started to realize that there are things they miss, and things they ignore. We all miss things, but we have no excuse for ignoring things that are not convenient for us to assimilate. For far too many of the deadhead types (just calling a spade a spade), the challenges facing Black and brown people never seem to fit neatly into their box of concerns, so a proper awareness of those challenges is deflected in the most cleverly calculated and practiced ways. Talk about *any* other issue, *please*. *Just not that*.

I take a sip of my cold brew (delicious!) as I come to terms with the fact that I am in a judgmental state of mind, and I feel annoyed by everyone. But I am in San Francisco, and the sun is shining. Why am I like this right now? What set me off? I didn’t even drink last night. I open my Bible and decide to read Psalm 119. It’s been awhile. I’m about halfway thru when I feel my heart and mind getting pulled together and I feel them getting pulled jointly into prayer.

—God, even if there is no relief, please empower me to be an agent of your love.

This tendency to say please when I pray.

—Save me from my sin. (Wow, I’m actually saying this.) I do not want to go through life or death without you.

The trio of spiritually bent coffee drinkers is deep in it. —If one of you has the answer and the other one doesn’t, that’s the answer.

Sitting at my table in a shaft of light, I feel that I’m grasping at paradise. I don’t want to be locked out. Maybe if I use more herbs, drink the right teas, hydrate, sleep, make the right phone calls, have sex with my wife, maybe then I will enter paradise.

—God help me to be an encouragement to Lily and Jakob and a blessing to Zen. That is my next assignment. The process is public. Don’t hide your spiritual assignments from the people who come in and out of your life.

—Restore my soul.

The barista with the goggles and ponytail is now talking about bubbling pools of fiery liquid, and once again I’m afraid that I’m accursed and that the barista is simply a mirror reflecting back to me my own thoughts. This is when it comes to me—we live more fully with commandments.

Back to Black and brown people, and the reluctance of a certain type of person to appropriately acknowledge the challenges they face. I’m going to rage against this, because I love so

much of what I read in the great novels of Thomas Pynchon and David Foster Wallace and the poems of Wallace Stevens and others. I simply don't love the chip on their shoulder that can only be interpreted as racism. Sorry, you can't explain it away. Any academian who does is splitting hairs. But of course, what else do you expect academians to do if not split hairs.

His mysticism was at war. He was trying to read the Psalms, but Bill had made him feel like I needed to read the New Testament. Bill was his accountability partner from the men's group he was loosely a part of.

Sometimes revelations don't translate to an enriching of the spirit. You still feel impoverished and physically unwell. Is something wrong? The creeping thought—have I already died? Ha! Anxiety latches on to all unpleasant possibilities.

Now the husband (at the table of three) is talking. —Are you familiar with the soft anthropic principle?

—I've heard of it.

—Well you have the soft anthropic principle and the hard anthropic principle. The hard anthropic principle is that we can only say something is happening because we're here to perceive it. I'm more of a hard anthropic principle kind of guy.

I am fully committed to eavesdropping.

Now they're talking about the scarcity of the moment, and now they're talking about we're going thru our sixth extinction.

I try to go back into my own thought process. —Answer the waves of despair with thanksgiving. But it's difficult right now because of how loud they're talking.

Whoa, but there's an answer to the question of whether or not I've died. Colossians 3:3—For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. I need to write down my will before it's too late.

Remember my chains. A prayer for anticipating. Weaponized fear of futility. Weaponized fear of lightweightness.

Please do not forget that I work for more than money. And please do not forget that while I work for more than money, I also work for money.

I find that when I pray, my heart starts anticipating goodness.

Now they're talking about witches apparently—Move to the outskirts, they'll call you a hag.

I'm not going to entertain this conversation any longer. Live for love, not art. Can love work through art? Good question. Don't try to answer it too fast.

Something serious is emerging. Should I try to carve out a narrative? Or should I watch and observe. I think what's emerging is that underlying all these waves of despair is —It's too late for me, my soul is lost, I am cursed. Caught up in alchemical warfare. How to rehabilitate from this?

Holy Spirit, bring me out of this dark cloud. Guide me, or simply take me by the hand. I feel the impulse to say Amen but don't want to scare anyone.

REMEMBER THERE IS NO RUSH.

I am trying to move a mountain. What will I do if it doesn't move? (The mountain is inside of me.)

Down past the Dharma Treasury Temple he walked, in the general direction of the beach. The temple was mysterious but you can know one thing about it that many do not know—you cannot fake having been there.

Seagulls gliding on the newborn breeze. He wrote a poem in his new format which he hadn't yet named:

the sign of the cross? As I trace the reactive rings smoking with dark philosophy I say a prayer. Not the prayer for greatness I once prayed, but as I look out upon the pure greatness of the Pacific Ocean and feel its cold sooty water against my shins in realtime and I sink my feet into the sand as I sit on a log and read Burnt Norton and the wind blows birdfeathers against my legs with pants rolled up to keep them dry, I know I don't desire to be the Pacific Ocean. I desire only the eyes to see it. I desire vision. And what is

What is there for me to write that hasn't already been written? I understand it's a way of saying things beyond the things themselves that can be truly new. But what will be my way? And why do I still speak of the future as if I am a child?

God, give me a heart of gratitude as big as the Pacific Ocean. Big-hearted rinky dink. Been awhile since I heard that one.

Carhartt head to toe. Big container ships rolling into the harbor. A homeless encampment further down the beach. Fire flickering in a trashcan. No music. Only the solemn whhhhshhhhhhhwwwwhhhhwwwssSHHHhhhhhhhh of the waves. Walk quietly thru the world. Leave no trace, they say. An old woman with a cane gathered empty beer bottles and put them in a plastic bag. He looked at the time. 4:26. Dinner is at 6, Lily said. He wanted to stop for a glass of wine on the way back.

He narrowly avoided stepping in dog shit as he climbed the steep embankment to where he hoped to find a hose he could use to wash his feet. Not finding one, he used his sock to brush the now-dried sand off his feet.

At Galinette, the French bistro where you could get cheese boards with fresh blackberries, espresso, bread with salted butter (this is what he ordered along with a glass of almost clear white wine), he sat at a sidewalk table and studied the complex system of telephone wires over his head. He was interested in what the Beats saw in America.

Time was of the essence to iron out the unresolved dimensions of his life. He wanted a baby. The primal emotion that flooded him as he considered it. The hardcore essence of it. But alas, the conundrum. He carried trauma from their first pregnancy, and so did she. She, herself, had said that if they tried again and lost the baby again, she wouldn't be able to risk the heartache (and physical trauma) of a third loss. Understandable. He didn't even know if he could risk it a second time.

And then the whole thing gets even more under my skin and gets at my utmost insecurities because I know as of right now even tho hardworking as we are, we can't afford IVF or anything like that, so it's up to us to have a healthy natural pregnancy, and religion places the burden of it squarely on us with all its implicit suggestions that *prayer changes things* and *have you prayed about it* and *have*

you given it to God etc. On top of that I've about lost it with the money stuff, even now as I'm sitting in a coffee shop looking out at Pacific Ocean and Douglass firs and cypress, claiming for myself this moment of respite and inspiration, my phone buzzes intrusively with car insurance cancel alert, tightening my whole chest and shoulders and flooding my body with cortisol and my brain with worry. I'll have to tell Jessy, which will pave the way for her to again ask if this trip was worth it and now I'm upset and door to angels is closed. Not true at all, but perception is reality, etc.

The world demands our money to live in it, but makes it hard to get the money. I don't want to spend even a second thinking about the system of money. Life is too short. I want to shake maracas with Lily's baby on the floor of her room for early morning concerts with coffee and then go out onto the beach with apocalypse novel underpinnings to develop and refine. I just want to be free from the stress that money creates.

He parked on Masonic Ave. and started walking toward Haight-Ashbury. He hadn't walked far before he stumbled into a bookstore. The air inside was thick and fummy. He braved it. Searching the spines in the dusty shop, he saw mostly horror and sci-fi. He was about to leave when, ah!—finally—*A Canticle For Liebewitz*. Trade paperback. \$8.99. He bought it quickly and then left.

Infinite holy traffic on the 10. He arrived at Julian's and Syd's place at 8:15. Julian helps me carry my suitcases in. Syd isn't home yet but Julian is preparing a steamy stirfry. He opens a bottle of red wine from Argentina. We're having a delightful time. And then at some point he mentions that he's DJing during ACL with Ashmar and Brian Henry at Busy Signal. I'm instantly deflated. I don't know if Ashmar feels threatened by me or if he just doesn't like me, but he's never asked me to play at Busy Signal. And let's be clear, I *want* to play there. I also don't want to *ask* to play there. I'm trying to play it cool. But when I think about it, Joaquin asked me if he could play at Ah Sing Den and Ashmar asked me if he could play at No More Mr. Nice Guy.

We put ourselves into these small little worlds. These worlds where it matters that Ashmar, Julian, and Brian are on a bill together during ACL weekend and I'm noticeably absent. These worlds where we rely on the acceptance of a chosen few people versus the whole world in which there are billions of people and at least several hundred (but probably more like several hundred thousand) who are significant in the field we work in. Life is too short to get hung up. Life is too short to not *move on*.

For perspective, it's on your to-do list to write your will. Why fight for the approval of someone who isn't going to celebrate you when you're gone? Instead, find the center of your being and *be* there. Action will pour out of your being. Movement will pour out of your stillness.

Remember that everything is happening for you. Even when it feels like everyone is against you. Even if people are exerting their will against you, they can't change the fact that the universe is conspiring in your favor at the behest of its creator.

We all need cheerleaders. But sometimes you have to be the Pittsburgh Steelers and play the game without cheerleaders.

I need to be a better wizard. If wizards are never early and never late but always show up right on time, they at least show up with a gift. I didn't leave a gift with Lily and Jakob and I didn't bring a gift to Julian and Syd. It's not too late. I'll figure out something clever, my *forté*. Jessie texted me tonight and I asked me if I've been giving gifts to my hosts. My heart sank. Why hadn't I thought of that? Seems like an obvious thing to do. But it evaded me. Or I evaded it. Not consciously, of course. Still, no excuses. If I want to touch people with the love of God, I have to at least touch them first with the love of man. I feel ashamed now, but must remain confident. I will fix this, I have to. The pressure is on. But that's not right either. There's no pressure. Just like there's no rush. You can't be a wizard if you so easily succumb to outside pressure.

Are wizards ever forgetful? Or do they ever find themselves outside their comfort zone?

I sat in Julian's and Syd's spare bedroom/office after midnight in his comfortable ergonomic computer chair and looked around the room. His Bachelor of Arts degree sat displayed right above me. Adjacent to it was a goldplated rendering of Mother Mary, some rolls of film, a Portland Trailblazers pennant, a framed Quiller Wheel, a dry erase board that said *Do you want to do great work or not?* and beneath that it said *Mix/video—YouTube and Post that shit!* Our lives, our creative lives. Can't the rest of the world understand we are truly doing our best?

When you're traveling you've got to travel light and keep the smells down.

Do not let me hear of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly. Fancy lights and monsters. How many of us are just masturbating our way through adulthood?

The stuff about pregnancy, the trepidation of it, the trauma—maybe I can talk with Lily about it. Would Jessie mind? That shouldn't matter. Boys need sisters. Why should I be denied this because of biologie? I reject this limitation. Blood is thicker than water. But spirit is thicker than blood. And have you heard us laugh? Crying baby, wise woman.

A little jealousy goes a long way, like a little venom in a vaccine. Don't be scared of it. Be careful of it, be free of it. See it and understand it.

Lily wanted to pull a card for me. We had five hours, the two of us, brother and sister. She even lit a candle. We ate fish and rice and steamed vegetables and drank sparkling wolfberry soda. And of course we went into our trauma. Preacher's kids. In our conversation we flirted with golden darkness. We laughed about politics. Every mature theme arose at the table—suicide, blackmail, voodoo, infidelity, hell, drugs, butt plugs, gut health, neuroplasticity, Bob Jones University. I haven't wanted to admit that I went there because of its late break from racist institutional policy (no interracial dating until the year 2000 when Dr. Bob III went on Larry King Live and got backed into a corner on air in front of all of America and spontaneously announced the university was dropping the ban, shocking his board of directors and all the faculty and staff, but only after frail attempts to justify the ban on the grounds of obscure passages in Revelation about end-of-time one-world government

conspiracies and how different races falling in love apparently hastens the rise of the antichrist. This, of course, is the president of the school I attended for 2 years and Lily for 4 explaining this to Larry King on live TV. I yanked myself free of that school after my second year there, finding Dylan, who helped me salvage some of the religious language that still worked. Baby w/o the bathwater type shit. I kept loving Christian imagery, cross, blood, miracles, but needed to work out my shadows, of which there were many. Another poem:

ode to the Resistor. I would
find the light and write about it.
(If you filter pain thru poetry,
the poetry wins out.). And by grace
I would compose this

To sanitize the truth is to unsoul it. In humble rebellion, I record the mental fire and let my affliction sing.

We are all of us the stars of our dreams. Come down with me and hear the wawk of the seals, the kaw of the hideous ravens. I was brought to the altar of the ocean with a broken and contrite heart. I am a husband! How many of us get married still chasing ourselves?

Dog crashing thru waves with tennis ball in mouth. Continuous graffiti along cement barricade. Juan Freddy tag. Pablo Angel signature. A man with a guitar is resuscitating a unicorn. Helium burns in hearts of steel. Whalebone washed up on sand. Weird history everywhere you look. Somewhere across the water, behind a curtain of fog, Alcatraz. Blue shovel upright in sand next to empty watermelon shells. There are always secrets that sneak past ya. But life is our birthday cake.

One of the prettiest girls I know sent me a DM on Instagram and said she's in San Francisco too. Temptation number one. A grape in the fog. Bite into it and your head will explode. Not immediately, but slowly, over time.

Anytime I use the word *spirit* I feel like I need to specify the holy one. Lily tells me of the Farallon Islands. I tell her of the ghostflower.

The mother wound awakens.

My dying thought will be *I've got my whole life ahead of me.*

Time has done its number on us. Mystical maturity means being grounded and airborne at the same time. Neil Young just burst thru th' swinging saloon doors in my mind.

Coffee roasters with surfboards and bicycles in Pacifica. Lily sits in the backseat and breastfeeds Zennia while I pace the parking lot making phone calls. Are we breaking out or breaking in?

I make a voice not into my phone as I burp from the root beer. Herein is a signal fire. I'm just passing the torch.

I had already loaded my suitcases into the car and said my goodbyes on Wednesday morning when I realized that I felt something was missing, I searched the feeling, and identified that it was because Lily had never pulled a card for me. This was a plot twist, as I typically avoided such things. Too much twisted thistle for doves to get their wings caught on. But before I could second-guess myself, I was texting her asking her if she could pull a card for me before I left. She told me later she was nursing Zennia when I texted. She set her intention and came downstairs and set on the bed and gave me a choice of which deck I wanted her to use. She had a white box and a colorful box. I chose the white box.

The first card I pulled was the mouse card. I instantly recoiled from the card and wondered if I should regret wanting to do this. Lily read the description of the card to me, and unfortunately it stung like nettle. I was thinking too small. Very organized and prepared in every scenario. But I was getting too preoccupied with pursuits that ultimately were a waste of time. I needed to zero in on a project worthy of my exacting eye.

I think she felt my discontent with the mouse card, and she asked if I wanted to pull a past-present-future sequence of three cards. I hurriedly agreed, and the three cards I pulled were the buffalo, the cheetah, and the shark. A drumfire of natural power!

She began reading the descriptions of these cards. What caught my attention is that the buffalo is a prayerful beast.

Then she told me about the cheetah—The cheetah must reconnect to its reason before it starts running. As a DJ, your spirituality bleeds into and fuels the cheetah energy, but the cheetah energy is transforming the buffalo energy into what needs to be reckoned with in the movement of the shark. Earth, fire, and water. The great white shark doesn't sleep. It enters into a trance while swimming. And it travels far. I recalled feeling grounded by the ocean. That scares me.

In a historical context religion turned the buffalo roaming America into a colonized churchmouse. Juxtapose this with the magnitude of the apex predator.

—A spiritual creature turned into the fastest creature on earth, but now it has to get honest. Don't be afraid of going into the ocean. Be afraid of not going there. The heat of the fire cards emit the elixir of our transformation. Fire is the only thing that transforms the darkness into light.

The creatures of this suit—creatures of the gross realm—are weighed down by the excess earth element.

We finished our session with a light search of the Zodiac. She mentioned something about the sixth and seventh houses, and then said that Mercury was in my eighth house.

Driving down the 1 with jazz playing, I stop at the first place that catches my attention: a brutalist bunker built during WWII high on a cliff that drops off hundreds of feet into the crashing Pacific. I stood looking down at the white foam exploding on the rocks and felt something massive attempting to break forth. Life is a vapor. Old sweet lonely hills.

I get into sunny Santa Cruz around 1pm, hungry. I park my car in the town square. A farmer's market is in full swing, all types of vendors. 2 guys with guitar and fiddle are sitting in metal folding chairs playing bluegrass. The sound of their harmonies takes me back to Asheville, NC.

It creeps back up that I want to write my will. First draft. That's all it is. As my life takes new shapes, so will my will. But it's never too early to have your house in order and your wishes on paper.

There's a bookstore/wine bar in Santa Cruz called Bad Animal. I'm a buffalo when I go in bookstores. Grazing as if time doesn't exist.

I wanted to ride the roller coaster at the Santa Cruz boardwalk, but it was closed for repairs so I kept driving. The sea air dried my contacts, so I guide the steering wheel with my elbows as I squirt contact solution into each of my eyes and then blink rapidly to spread the liquid across each sphere of vision. Sticker on truck in front of me said—*Proud to be a Union pipe fitter*. Sitting at light I look around me. Off to my right, on the other side of some trees, I see men raking the dirt of a baseball diamond.

Stayed the night in Pismo Beach. A cute town with very little pretense. Perfect place for night writing on the beach. Small waves of paranoia will try to defeat you, but this is the wisdom of life allowing this to happen.

For a man to reckon with what is beneath his actions, he must be fearless and fearlessly honest. I have kava if I need it. A band of light beams down from a break in the clouds.

Walking out into Pismo Beach morning all saintly, hoodie and shorts, secretly hid towel from hotel to clean feet after beach walk but first, coffee. Early morning beach town just as deserted as late night beach town. Didn't know you could still find tourist-free beaches in California, other than wrinkled skin nudist beaches and who wants that. The air is hazy and aglow, and the sunlight seems to be rising from the ground. I travel like a cheetah, wanting to see everything. I'm finding my way more and more to woods. Will soon write my sad pine testament. I have original blues.

I make my way down the sidewalk under awnings. Pink and green advertisements. Taffy and candy apples. Today is Dad's birthday. I'll go see the cemetery today maybe. Will he think that's special or strange? Is he superstitious? Hard sometimes to put yourself in your father's shoes, specially when it comes to secret mind superstition thoughts.

Here's when I haffa start bein tough. Blisters on my feet, old Beast of Burden lyrics in my brain. But I still must walk. Take the music out of my ears and hear the trucks beeping, unloading.

All America jam-packed with commercials. Bandmate from past life never answered the phone. Old faithful Heron Preston hoodie which I wear with all.

Queer to him even how he was more inclined to wander the tired streets of civilization than be subsumed in the perpetually fresh grandeur of nature. But today he would build upon the epiphanes of yesterday. Walking to pier's end—a ritual harking back to his childhood. At the end of the pier, ocean so deep out here it's quiet, the occasional squawk of a gull, highway so distant you can see the cars and trucks but can't hear them, saltbreeze cooling his leghairs—hard to believe this is the same life as hospitals, taxes, arguments, confessions, the hopelessness of fluorescent lights, Uber driving, phone calls from debt collectors, and loading the dishwasher. The Pacific Ocean is neither liberal nor conservative, neither secular nor sacred. The Pacific Ocean is Shakespeare. Pierwood creaks and groans 'neath his feet, aware of the strength in which it's rooted. The Pacific Ocean. Even in its fury it is never angry. At its most violent, it is never unjust. A godawful consideration. No one thinks a shark is wrong or evil when it attacks its prey. We are the trespassers, and we all know it deep down.

He masturbated twice last night. It was strategic. As soon as he felt the cloven-hoofed thuds within his somnolent flesh, he fell onto the king-sized hotel bed and jerked out every prospect of compromise. There are men who say masturbating is itself wicked, but morality is on a sliding scale.

Wandering the streets like a ghost, looking in windows at diners with the lights off and chairs stacked upside down on top of tables. The poet is the ghostkeeper.

He moved inevitably toward the sea. Completeness is a drug, he thought. I'm exchanging completeness for glimpses. All the *best* art doesn't give us completeness, it only gives us glimpses. Someone bravely parked an Airstream on the pier.

Everyone's trying to check certain boxes while they're alive, whether they admit it or not. I want to have an orgy. I want to be athletic again. Before I let go I want to hit a homerun. I want to publish poetry and a novel. I want to play a Boiler Room set. I want to at least once be a pastor.

Little insects zigzag from seashell to seashell in the moist sand. At ocean's threshold I feel that addiction's slimy tentacles never more shall arrest me. Naïve? Perhaps naivete is the lost elixir that is unrecoverable.

Allow yourself to sometimes suffer. It will come, welcome it or no. Dropped pen in mud. Still works. Avenging seaweed of practicality wraps itself 'round our ankles and tries to climb up our anxiety into our presence. As you travel, you will try to achieve sustained bliss.

I'm connecting prose to prose and finding poetry. Heaven's truth, I'm a slow learner. Last minute breeze blows sweetly thru my conscience. Editing is finding agreements between heart and mind. I've laid the edgestones for the Great Work. Now I roll up my sleeves and make a push toward centerstage, eyes laser-focused on the microphone under the spotlight.

Driving down the highway, a night angel, he passed and was passed by some of the prettiest tractor and trailers he'd ever seen.

Today, his father's birthday, he would be returning to the city of angels. Always the agitating awareness of time. One more hour. One more day. One more year. He wanted to live a lifetime in every enchanted corner of the earth. A cheetah to get there, a buffalo to remain. Always squinting his eyes perchance the fin of a shark.

The love in my heart for Lily takes new heights. I felt like she gave me the ocean. To wax poetic on the foliated earth.

I'm in L.A. silent as a fox. The cemetery where Grandpa is buried and where we had the memorial for Uncle Bob is more than an hour from my hotel. I decide not to put it off but instead go straight there. I don't mean to be superstitious, but the inheritance is coming, slow as a tortoise, but it is coming, and what would I be if I came to Uncle Bob's old city and didn't pay my respects?

As you age it gets harder to *not* make decisions based on money.

America is under review. Sitting atop Hoxton luxury downtown hotel with chicken thigh and Alligator Tears cocktail he thought to himself—we're passing. We're moving in and out of fictions that someone else constructed, *sure*, but we're passing. Am I thinking this because I'm white?

If you want to be in this business, get used to dining with the enemy.

Slow learner, slow learner. Thinking with a small mind gets you this: every momentary affliction or slight challenge worries you into thinking *this* is the moment that the world around you

will reject you and decide that you are *indeed* a fraud. When in reality you keep flowing through these challenges and changes untarnished. How many times have we almost died?

He thought about messaging Kyra again. She's so pretty. But he's not gonna. He's a husband. He masturbated again in his room before he took a nap and went to the rooftop. Felt unusually good today. Used fragrant hotel lotion.

Phone call with Jessy generated cognitive dissonance like scene from the director's cut of *Apocalypse Now*.

Eliot had Laforgue, I have Kerouac. Dismissed by the mantle-wearing literati but possessing a few key elements needed to complete my own style.

Something about when you're drunk you don't nearly as much fear dying. Probably why religious men, too many of them, so loudly condemn drinking.

Under the Orpheum lights, recovering a strange old broadcast. I wore leather pants for rockstar ethos. Brand new Honor The Gift T-shirt. Cut tags. Just now getting to the Frank Ocean part of the broadcast. Candid postmodern preeminence of calculated relatable lyric. The uptopness of it can't be touched. Touché. The DJ plays an acapella. Good shit. Gotta look up her @ on the flyer later. Damn, I'm hearing the same SoundCloud edits I play back in Texas. The interconnectedness of this whole thing produces big social fuzzball. The poet is breaking out of prison. Not a vast swath of humanity keeping poetry alive. Only the ones for whom the fire never dies.

Getting out into the streets and laying my eyes on beautiful women in shorts and short skirts, I wish I had worn shorts. Plausible chance of me getting to sit next to a girl wearing short shorts. Then our legs would've touched. That's all I want most days. That's innocent, right? Wouldn't need to confess that to Jessy.

Gotta get my rocks off in a more feastful way.

The DJ is playing *Ain't I*. Atlanta is alive! I love the rebellion of exclamation marks. But now I'm writing about writing, and there's nothing more pretentious. But what if I told you I was getting a blowjob while scribbling pretensions? What if I told you I was wearing a gold chain and a pirate's cross earring? What if I told you I felt the quickness of the cheetah and the brutality of the shark waking up inside this 36-year-old buffalo heart? More riddles to solve, always, but does Batman try to answer the Joker's riddles? What if I told you I was wearing black leather pants, Nikes, Honor the Gift T-shirt, had blue hair, jewelry, USB stick in my pocket and poem bursting forth unhinged?

The security guy asked me if I had grenades in my tote bag. I said no but everything in my bag is a lethal weapon except maybe the hand lotion, chapstick, Altoids, and AirPods.

I'm not going to stop till I get to the orgasm. Did the angels wanna have sex 'n that's why they got kicked out? If I could relive youth I would have sex with so many more women before getting married. But I can't get bent outta shape. My wife is interested in cooperating with my desires. But to live outside the law you must be honest.

For the first time in my LIFE I'm attracted to a trans woman. Holy fuck. Is it ok to become sexually fearless? I'm not asking you. I'm asking me.

His mother wanted him to write, to use his gift as a writer. He doesn't think this is what she had in mind.

I married a woman who truly wants the best for me, he whispered to the dreaming city. And in that moment he wrote his address inside the front cover of his journal in case something happened to him. Uncanny preoccupation with The End. (Apocalypse Now, opening scene.)

You have to recognize you're at the crossroads. Not a crossroads, *the* crossroads. You're in California, but you're in Mississippi. The old, weird America lives. You listened to everything, you read everything, you watched everything. And here you are. Life is not an orgy for the faint of heart. You have to digest Scripture and wait for the earth to quake.

Wife at home. Thousands of miles between them. He was lonely. His energy low. Drunk. Horny. Running out of money. Down to the wire. Sad. Nonetheless, joy. Corked inside his skull like aged wine, prophetic verse blooming in the mud, genuine, undistracted, free, but real—*real*—like the pleasure of eating Chinese take-out in NYC—chicken wings if you want to get specific—

He fell asleep in the back of the Lyft, \$40 both ways. I'm not paying for the party, I'm paying for the poetry, he mused. Luckily, booked a gig and got \$450 in advance. Just a little DJ magic.

Nonetheless, exhaustion burned in mental wires. But he kept pressing his pen into the swelling pages of his Leuchtturm. He secretly wanted to give life to his influences, but it wasn't quite pure art. It was also a way of flirting. Stop imagining old dudes as your readers and start imagining young women, he thought to himself as the car set at a red light on Sunset Boulevard. He looked out the window and saw the Whiskey A-Go-Go, a large black trailer parked at the corner with lights blinking and men wearing all black hastily loading gear.

I am 100% susceptible to sexual temptation tonite, he thought. If I see some sexy legs, I'm lookin! The spyglass was in his hand, and the planets on his paper glowed with perfect light.

I did it again. I need therapy. I need healing for the neural pathways.

Endless dreaming highway. Starlight ballroom. Why no sleep in my body? LA is mathematically infinite. No one has ever been down every road in this city. For a place filled with so much abandonment, there sure is a lot of good coffee here.

Do you have a subscription to the resurrection? Have you ever been to the house of determination? We want the world and we want it now. This city of all cities, strange monster that it is, has a way of chipping you at the edges, making you not care so much about minor afflictions—toenail, stomach.

Headache now. Going to sleep. Finally, for the first time since America turned blue, there's an arrow coming out of her mouth. You had to get out. Don't be ashamed of it.

Somach growling now, but enough granola, it's not doing anything.

Ashmer Boiler Room set (what?). You trusted your way up the ladder this far. It's not until you have detractors that you will know your own strength. You need not panic. God doesn't mind if the jazz keeps playing from your phone as you get down on your knees at the side of your hotel bed and say THANK YOU for getting me through this day. Watch over my sleeping body. His mercies are new every morning.

We play at the same cause and effect Tetris, roulette, solitaire. Shame for spending money. He accidentally kept one of the wireless microphones from the wedding.

Waiting for Canaan outside The Emerald. It's not until you have detractors that you will know your inner power. Deep calls unto deep.

It can be so hard to decide what to wear. Having a uniform helps.

A little bit of blood on that blade might be yours. Open a can of Stella Artois. No lights are on. A big part of what I think makes LA feel so inspiring to me is the proximity to everything. Precision finds my pen here. But this gestalt, this synthesis of styles, has been years in the making. I studied the target, and I'm not gonna miss it.

Brian mixed rosé and a healthy energy drink in a plastic cup. We listened to Outkast, early Outkast, Decatur Psalm, Babylon, etc. To think the seagulls are out there, still screaming, gliding over solemn Pacific waves. Brian showed me his sin cabinet, filled with bottles of alcohol, ziploc bags of weed and mushrooms, etc. I told him I'm a sipper, no interest in the rest. We laughed when I said that Baltimore club is Jersey club without a condom.

I'm excited to play Sunday Sessions. I'll be the headliner that day.

Satirical news. Clickbait. Dig the rims. Sense the licks.

Some 21st century fox walks by.

The last final thing to do now is pack before I fly home to my wife. I can't wait to be with her. I imagine the wine cans exploding in my suitcase and ruining the books I bought in Santa Cruz.

I'm waking up, reality has already begun to hit. I've got to notify Leslie and Mitch about more dates that I can't do, and I've got to figure out Nashville. I realize I can't, and I won't, keep giving these scheduling conflicts dominion over my peace of mind. I quietly fold my blankets. A dog is barking.

Why this anxiety today about flying? God, please get me home safely.

I'm really happy to be going home to Jessy. I just want to get there. And I'm so close to making it. I think that's why I'm on edge. Also the superstition of the sixes, and a guy in the front row was reading a book called *When Hell Was In Season*. Wish I could think of a word for whatever it is that causes these reflections of my anxiety to come at me with such precision.

You can learn a lot from people you don't like, and you can learn a lot from people you don't agree with. I think I pulled a rib out of place, because I'm having trouble inhaling all the way.

Here's a thing to remember about traveling. Singular moments may not feel magical, but you are weaving a magical tapestry, so let it cook. Just be present and remain bravely aware. And so this is true of writing as well. Just keep going, even if it feels like what you're writing isn't very profound.

No Golden Gate Bridge. No Hollywood sign. No art museum. No newsstand. No Soho House. No sexual escapades. And yet, a fullhearted sutra. Intimacy with the ocean. A clinging memory of a depth I was able to penetrate to, and the flush of a realization that I've been to that depth a thousand times and was simply unable to document the treasure. The awareness that blossomed on this trip temporarily recoils back in on itself as I work through the anxiety I feel before the plane takes off. By all methods of accounting, flying home is the safest segment of my journey. But yet, I'm searching deep within myself for the faith, *the faith*.

I look at the man sitting by the window (I always try to get an aisle seat). I can tell by the font on the pages of the open magazine in his lap he's reading the New Yorker.

Courage is gathering in my chest. This feels promising.

All my life roadtrips and the suchlike have been somewhat of a Holy Grail for my spirit.

Going home is wonderful thing today, a reality that I embrace. But it's a reality that's plagued by an unpleasant combination of responsibilities: bills to pay, things to figure out, discussions to have, phone calls to make, texts to send, emails to reply to, *etc.* I'm going to have to drive Uber for the rest of the month.

Accept your own timeline. Understand and accept that some will not bless you on your journey, but others will. Understand also that it is natural to think more about this withholding or withdrawing of blessings that it is to think about the bestowing of blessings. We are seasoned and practiced at getting hung up on the negative (if they are negative) dimensions of life. I get an idea for a story about an agnostic who feels desire for something so strongly he starts to pray.

The well-lit parts of us need no introduction. It's the unspoken and often unconscious parts of us, the disclaimed shadows, that require a magic entryway into our relationships, or at best the ones wherein we wish to be our most vulnerable.

A brevity. A timestamp. One of my favorite laws of life is that another human who is in competition with us can never assert themselves in regard to our destiny unless we give them that power, but we can always take that power back. Every time my thoughts drift to Ashmar, I feel offended by him. I feel some very difficult emotions toward him. But I do like him! I enjoy being around him. He's kind to me, and more importantly he's kind to my wife. But there's something under the surface that makes me feel a little threatened by him. A gross feeling (gross in the scientific sense).

We are in an ever-evolving state of grace, a flow state, and each of us has permission to triumph.

I want to go to the YMCA and sit in the hot tub to relax, but I sense Jessie's disappointment. It's the cheetah who wants to go, to recover the serenity prayer of the buffalo, but it's the shark who must advocate for the cheetah and the buffalo, otherwise he will run the risk of remaining a churchmouse.

Spitballing. Shoegazing. I have Gravity's Rainbow on the empty seat next to me, but I don't need it. Between 5 and 7 blank pages left of this journal I'm writing in (I'm on page 248!), so I'm committed to filling those pages with reflexions before I set my feet on Texas solid ground.

No More Mr. Nice Guy was still alive. He wanted to reinvigorate it, breathe new air into its lungs. The people knew it was a good thing. Attendance was rarely high, but the spirit almost always was. Even Canaan, Hip Hop DJ laureate, agreed that electronic music was the path forward. We would never have to leave Hip Hop behind. All these genres overlap anyway, so the ART of it all would be merging as much as we could, working it all into a synthetic sphere of music, which we were already doing, but now with a new center of gravity. Everything that rises must converge.

He met Siobhan Bell at Everyday People. He was next to her onstage. They made eye contact and he fangirled the fuck out. —Gotta figure out how to process my admiration for women's beauty and my desire to *express* my enjoyment of their beauty. I am a married man for Christ's sake. This

must be a common dissonance, but whatever other men do about it remains hidden from me. In some ways I still feel as naïve as ever I was.

Caffeined veins. Recycled love. Imagine for a moment we've never actually been led astray.

He was talking to the painter who painted the paintings that surrounded them. Giant arched porticos and windows open out into LA night. The grand finale of Jessie's album *Phase* completes a masterpiece, one we made together. Rejected, it gathers the dust of time. But it, like No More Mr. Nice Guy, like the city of Atlanta, is still alive. My wife's spirit has not yet seen its brightest day. I will not sleep until I see her dreams light up the night sky.

I will say now that this was the time I became a writer. On this trip, my pen never stopped moving. Now the work of refinement begins. Classical piano fills my ears. Back pain dulled by Advil (took 800 mg). I swear I'll rage against decay.

The lines of demarcation, the horse latitudes, the breaking on through to the other side—these are all unbroken refrains to the dearly departed, compassionately curated, forgetting too that I just ready Hamlet beginning to end for the 2nd time (or was it the 3rd) just before leaving on this trip. How my journal is now complete. But this one has in it much that I will actually publish. I'm not afraid anymore of being the writer that I am. I've shown myself I can do it. Crunching coffee stain'd eye between my jaws, I contemplate putting on my hoodie. Great joys await, great unexpected joys. And in their midst, flowers for my mother.

I'm trying to remember, when did it rain? With handsome heaven-bounded sparkle in my eye, I resolve to triumph over hell wherever it appears. We're starting our initial descent into Austin, winds out of the north.

Faith, hope, and love are all acts of rebellion.

And here, the rest of the light—

I want to slow it down, I want to have it for longer. Oh, the torment of something dear to us slipping away unrecoverable, now unreachable, oh but we can still look into each other's eyes though we can longer make contact, just for a little longer now, there were secrets we never told each other, too painful to tell, too painful to hear—should we confess now?—or is it too late?—maybe just a little too late for that. Where do we go inside of ourselves in that last hour of no turning back? What little jewel emerges for the palm of our hand to close around?

As the wheels touch down, I agree with life and a love well-emptied. Missing you was all I had. And now I surrender even that.

My wife's soul is precious to me.

Stepping there onto the porch where last I saw Uncle Bob through the barely open door.

I always imagined myself writing a massive *Gravity's Rainbow* about my life.

Alcohol makes people see conspiracies.

The diner on the first floor of the Hoxton in downtown LA used to be French style fine dining. Now the space features overpriced breakfast and lunch with no special twist. He ordered an iced coffee. Now here's the thing about iced coffee. When he ordered it, he always asked if it's served with large ice cubes or crushed ice. If it was crushed ice, he didn't want it. What started as a basic preference had turned into a non-negotiable. Oftentimes baristas would give him the funniest look when he asked this question, or worse, as if he'd just said the *f* word.

James Brown heard faintly through highup speakers: *I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing (Open Up The Door I'll Get It Myself)*. There's nothing like that thrust you feel in his music.

The pancake he ate was the best he'd ever had. The combination of syrup, butter, and golden-browned pancake in the morning after acting out is proof that God loves us. He licked the knife and slide the plate away from him and swallowed a big gulp of iced coffee, admiring the large smooth ice cubes in the glass. He was living again, in the aftermath once again, dopamine levels returning to normal.

Life is the way the spirit winks before it leaves the body. These are the disembodied poetics you carefully learn, meticulously, over many amounts of time. Crazy wisdom. By one thought you can blast through all history. Shots fired. Crank and hype. Thank you Allen for your poetry and even more for your letters.

Bits

When a white man feels disembodied, what could be causing that? Is it ok for him to take up space and say he's suffering? Should he only say this to other white men? I'm afraid to even ask these questions because of how they might be perceived.

Certain spiritual concepts have gone out of style. For example, the concept of being under attack. Admittedly, the problem with these concepts is they can't be empirically proven. A shame, because they are good concepts, but perhaps they would lose their power if they were proven.

chemical rills

Sitting in a coffee shop in the Sunset District he noticed a trend with high school students coming in between classes. A lot of girls were wearing baggy jeans, cut off or torn around the bottom, oversized gray sweatshirts (most of them w/o logos), and keychains dangling from their belt loops. One girl had a tiny KAWS companion dangling at her waist. Cute.

He went into the bathroom to take a piss and the toilet seat was already up. So when he finished he lowered it down, and there was a streak of blood on one side of the toilet seat. Disgusted, he turned toward the door, worried that he'd touched it with my fingers. Then his better nature intervened, and he turned back and tore some toilet paper from the roll and wiped the blood from off the porcelain.

He finished washing his hands then sat back down to write a little more. He was feeling the urge to wrap it up and get moving. The ocean was drawing him. He looked around the coffee shop. It had gotten busy, it was lunchtime. The ladies behind the counter raced to keep up with the orders. Crumbs speckled the tile floor and a few crumpled napkins escaped the overflowing trash bin. A piece of paper by the window said free organic coffee grounds for your garden.

X Venus Prototype in Andante. Latex for entertainers.

Divvy the loot.

Sometimes it's unnerving to accept that all this will be lost.

Weeks later, sitting at his desk drinking hot dandelion tea, he would think of it.

The world is just big enough to never get enough of.

Into my heart an air that kills.

Words

Panorama
Draconian
Simpatico
Cure
Offhand
The otherness
Homeostasis
Tyranny of the screen
Residual idealism
Bedlam
Agonist
Gypsies snapping peas
Astronomical
Snow

Malachi Star