

# Ke kupua

**DECEMBER 30, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, REDUX**

She said, “I think you’re brilliant,” when he knew he would kiss her. And adults who kiss invariably fall into more. He had a hard time discerning a kiss from the words he heard. Things can sound so pretty when you want them to.

Back. On the bed. Alone. Not quite negative. Disturbed. No reason why. There were decades to go, save some disaster, and instead of hope, he felt an involuntary compulsion to ruminate. The chemicals in his brain were so easily manipulated; he manipulated them.

Today was the beginning of forever. Until everything else ended, and for anyone else, this would be impossible to comprehend.

## That’s not even close to funny

**DECEMBER 27, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

She keeps secrets. I wish I had a few. I watch her walk with a lilt of flair and admire her confidence. It’s hard to believe how many times I’ve broken her. Looking at her now it’s hard to believe she can be broken. She let me in I guess. It’s easier to break things from the inside.

Now I can’t even get a word inside of her, much less any other part of me. I suppose I deserve her defense.

Today is beyond both of us, like it or not, she has to speak to me. Courts compel things that love has long abandoned.

“Did you sign?”

“Yes. Did you?”

“Yes.”

“So, then.”

“So what?”

“I guess. So what?”

Hi! How can I help you?

“What are you trying to say?”

“I still love you?”

“That’s not even close to funny.”

But I’m not joking. And of course, I don’t say it. Every syllable with her must be calculable. I have no calculus for this feeling.

“You know you had everything?”

“I know.”

“You know you fucked it all away?”

“I know.”

“You know I still love you?”

“I know.” (Full disclosure: I didn’t.)

“So what now?”

“This I don’t know.”

“So smart and so stupid.”

## Be better

**DECEMBER 25, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

I’m always so certain. Even when I’m wrong. The word *perhaps* brings this kind of question. All I want to say is a word. But why would I ruin a connection, however tenuous? I’m not crazy. I guess I am sometimes. Or I was. Or I will be. Guarantees are fucking difficult. I saw your name. It made my heart spark in a good way, and, good or bad, I guess for that moment, it was good. I dream about you. Sometimes, in situations we were actually in. And this time, I get to act better. Sometimes it’s a new situation. And then I just get to be better.

## Joey Martin

**DECEMBER 24, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

Lately, I’ve been preoccupied with death. Not in any particularly morbid way, and certainly not about my own except to wish that it wasn’t inevitable. I think it’s “*the death watch*” reminding us who died in 2015, and the depressing death watch.

Hi! How can I help you?

as she has gone from diagnosis to hospice, by her husband Rory on his blog and my Facebook news feed. I'm not sure why, because I'm not a fan. I assume since the metadata collection that Facebook uses to push the absolutely relevant ads and news stories I currently see when I log in has also been successful at diagnosing my recent preoccupation.

We all have to die, and pretty much nothing else **has** to happen. I hate that idea. But, the alternative is probably worse.

Oh, Merry Christmas, everyone.

## Could it be magic?

**DECEMBER 24, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

Riding home today and the song, seemingly chosen at random, completed a perfect storm of factors: it is the day before Christmas and I am far removed from the one I might choose to spend it with, yet somehow feel as close to her as I ever have. I've had two hours of sleep and fifteen cups of coffee and only a day-old bran muffin to stem the caffeine's tide. I've been spoiled with the unexpected mid-day lilt of her voice, longer than usual because she has locked her keys in the car and needs to remain onsite to wait for the locksmith and Barry Manilow.

I know something in my life has changed when I hit repeat on Spotify because I want to glean some insight into the ways of life and love from a pop song first made popular in the middle years of my childhood.

I literally caught myself texting the lyrics to her when, in a rare moment of restraint, I grabbed me by the imaginary lapels, smacked myself upside the face and head, and with a stern rebuke gave the order to, "Get a hold of yourself, man. Put on the Cro-Mags or 7 Seconds, for god's sake." But I would have none of it. I made a compromise. I erased the text message. But I played "Could It Be Magic" on repeat until I removed the headphones from my ears upon entering my apartment.

I've always had a weakness for syrup and a melody.

Hi! How can I help you?

“I didn’t say you’re not smart, I said you’re not an intellectual.”

**DECEMBER 15, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

This is why you don’t talk when you’re even slightly annoyed. It’s never correct to say, “That’s because you are not an intellectual.”

English isn’t her first language, so that kind of nuance is misplaced. This is how it started: she said she looked fat in her new bikini. For the record, the correct reply to that assertion is, “No you don’t. You look like a wet seal if it had to wear a two-piece.” What you don’t say is, “I feel fat, too.”

Later, when she says, “You just called me stupid,” even though what you actually said was, “You’re not an intellectual,” don’t respond with, “What I meant was, you’re more corporeal than cerebral.” And when she says, “What?” you definitely don’t double down and try to explain.

That’s not when you remind her that she’s from Europe. You don’t say, “You grew up behind the Iron Curtain,” or, “Romania is a second-world country.” It’s really not the best idea. It’s not even a good idea.

I thought it was funny in real time. She didn’t think so.

## Tommy Lee’s dick

**DECEMBER 15, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

Everyone thinks drumming is easy. Tap your fingers to your favorite song. You can’t handle the backbeat but think you’re Neil Peart because you can hit your knees in time to *Tom Sawyer*. Now, make your left hand hit at 3/4 time and your right at 3/8 to make that delayed sound. Now make sure you’re right foot never meets the bass while your left foot is too fast. Now all four limbs. Now. On, and sing in

Hi! How can I help you?

harmony. You imbecile. Drummers are hidden behind drums. But they do things you will never do. And this includes fucking Pamela Anderson with an impossibly large drummer dick.

## A complicated mess

**DECEMBER 15, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

There's a certain beauty to being alone. A comfort. I wake up with me. I went to bed with me. Whatever I was missing is the same at 4:30 am as it was at 1. It's quieter now. The kids went to school a little earlier and were yelling. Kids are weird. They're perfect or atrocious. I like the way life feels right now. I like the way kids sound. I like the motion of the moon across the sky. I like the birds that aren't endemic. I like you.

Things change though. Love becomes hate. People don't change, really. So what changed? Perception, most likely. If I could give anything, I would go back in time to the place that was gentle. The place where you found easiness. This fucking complicated mess is a complicated mess. I still love you. I still love everything, And it's a complicated mess.

## Steep, calamitous, and quick

**DECEMBER 14, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

I'm not sure if the correct term is meta, or post-modern, or post-whatever. But this is definitely aware of itself. I'm not sure why I torture myself. Thinking about you, about us, is like playing with a sore in your mouth or a loose tooth that hasn't yet given way. I like to be aware that it's there.

I know you think about our things. You wouldn't be human if you didn't. I'm also pretty sure you have come to some very different conclusions than I have.

Yours and my fall was steep, calamitous, and quick.

I was your best friend on August 1. We slept together for the last time on September 5. But by October, we were arms-length robots. My knowing exact dates shouldn't surprise you. I'm not obsessed anymore than I normally would be. I just have one of those memories that you loved me for, and then hated me just as strongly for.

Hi! How can I help you?

# Ewa Beach

**DECEMBER 11, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

My memory of here is that the place was hot and humid, and it is. Perhaps my ten-year-old sense of reality had not experienced enough data points to make a sound declaration. Ewa Beach was hot. Kailua was not.

It's calm outside and the state of mind I find myself in is more tolerant of the heat; Hawaii is never really hot. Texas is much hotter. And unlike Phoenix or Las Vegas, it's not a dry heat. And no year gives respite. There is no such thing as "the year without a summer" as there was in New England. Every summer in Texas is hot. Every Spring you have by then forgotten just how hot 21 days over 100 degrees is. And then you get weird anomalies, like pins pushing through the cardboard protection of seasons. I've sweat my days through three digits in January, and one digit in April. I watched incredulously as the National Weather Service in Fort Worth issued a winter storm warning when it was 86 degrees outside, then watched it drop to below twenty before the sun was fully gone.

I love watching the weather. I prefer inclement weather. Weather is a convenient and easy metaphor. But that's not why I like it. Here's a stretch. I love the weather for the same reason I love baseball. Everything can be measured, everything is measured, and every measurement is subject to immediate recall with the correct resources and effort; every measurement, even at the quantum level, matters.

I can tell you records in both, and you won't care, but they exist independently of you or me. Esoteric and beautiful, they act as a beautiful gateway to codifying understanding.

# Cocaine Buddha

**DECEMBER 11, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Money. If that's what it's all about? It seems such a waste of time. What does money give you? One minute not worrying about needing more. It's like happiness. The fleeting moment that leaves you, at best not happy, at worst? Unhappy. Happiness felt like the emotional equivalent of cocaine. You always know how much you

Hi! How can I help you?

that dopamine-fueled search for more. The Buddha was right. Don't want it and you won't need it. Absence causes suffering. And for the record, I'm not confirming or denying my first-hand knowledge of cocaine.

# Apophenia

**DECEMBER 9, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

That is the human tendency toward connection of unrelated phenomena where none exists, toward creating patterns, even when none exists. Trying to bring order to chaos, is what separates us from being an animal. I suppose there are other things, but other primates don't seem much concerned with the correlation versus causation debate. Bonobos will go down on each other, and chimpanzees will rip your face off, but neither group seems too concerned with voting districts or feminism.

The rate of divorce in Maine correlates almost perfectly with the rate of consumption of margarine in the rest of the country. And that's not even the strangest example of almost perfect correlation. The number of letters in the winning word of the national spelling bee and people killed by venomous spiders. Almost perfectly the same. The point of talking about this? Many people find a cause and effect here. Don't eat margarine or your cousin in Maine gets a divorce? Her marriage is doomed. Don't spell long words, or you might kill someone with a spider bite.

These examples are ridiculous. Life is ridiculous. And the same impetus that suggests to a certain element that mass killings or 9/11 or Kennedy assassinations happened for a larger purpose, will also suggest this ridiculousness. It's part of the human condition. These patterns that exist or don't, that are recognized or not, that are true or false. To anyone that believes them, they are as real as God, or as oxygen in the air, or as subatomic truth or infrared light. The argument, of course, is just because it cannot be sensed, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. A negative proof shifts the burden, right or wrong, to the skeptic. And a lack of evidence becomes a virtue, not a deficit.

I think we all know better. I do.

Hi! How can I help you?

# The secret

**DECEMBER 7, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

If it were possible would it matter? One of my favorite books is “Strange Life of Ivan Osokin.” In it, he begs a magician for another chance to live his life. And then proceeds to make every single mistake he made the first time until he finds himself with the magician again. He has an epiphany. He is on a wheel, that keeps spinning and returns him to the same place.

It’s by P.D. Ouspensky. If you haven’t heard of him, it’s not a big deal, hardly anyone has. But he writes about the secret. Not the bullshit prosperity gospel that brings you everything you think you want just because you believe it will. But the one that recognizes how people act. Realistically and metaphorically we live on a wheel. And it is the rare individual who even recognizes that. The few that can see the wheel and render its truths are defied, like Jesus or Siddhartha. It just doesn’t happen that often. And when it does, you know.

## Against all odds

**DECEMBER 6, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

In terms of evolution, ants are very successful. So were dinosaurs. So are crocodiles. Bacteria are absolutely the apex. Humans are an anomaly. The fact that I care what you think? The cosmic or even geologic odds that this might happen are statistically zero. I’m feeling how I’m feeling against all odds, against the concept of odds. So there’s that. Short version: you can’t possibly empathize, but I’m not making up how I feel.

## Paraffin

**DECEMBER 6, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Put your hand 3/4 of an inch above the flame of a candle. Immediately, it hurts. Don’t move. Watch the burned wax turn black to paraffin. Its melting point is only 99 Fahrenheit. less than half a degree above your “normal.” More like urine than lava. Then it stops burning. Black tendrils. It turns out what hurts is subjective. This is a metaphor.

Hi! How can I help you?



# Lick the bottom

**DECEMBER 6, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

You have to lick the bottom, so you know what it tastes like. You have to lose a lot, maybe everything, to know what you had meant anything at all. This existential struggle? Everyone goes through this, some just can't articulate it. Who with a contemplative mind has not contemplated forever? Who hasn't feared the idea? How many ants or roaches did you kill this year? What do you think their afterlife fate is? What do you think yours is?

I used to go to parties and realize what hour it was, and realize there were only so many hours left to try to have fun. That's how I've been looking at life lately. If I'm lucky, I have 30 years left, and that's far less than I've already been here. Are you ready? I'm not.

# Inherent conflict

**DECEMBER 6, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

How do you finish telling a story when you can only think fifteen seconds at a time? How do you create a narrative when three minutes of contemplation is exhausting? These are rhetorical questions when I'm lucky. Writers write, right? But what if writing, what if every thought, is embroiled? I have no third act, and I don't know if I ever will. I can't get past the conflict. The conflict defines how I live; it defines who I am right now, who I've been for a while. The conflict or nothing is how I feel.

I saw an old friend last night and he was in chains over how he felt about a relationship he was in. I felt like I was in a zoo, watching something that had no personal resonance. I told him I was the same way for a while, after the last time, but after what happened, I decided to turn it off, and so I did. With me, it's always been all or nothing. And for six years now, I have chosen nothing. I have broken the alternative so many times that it might not be an option to go back. I can tell the story, but I can't live it anymore. Too many things get broken.

# Solopsism revisited

**NOVEMBER 19, 2024**

Hi! How can I help you?

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

I can trace back every anxiety and the majority of bad feelings in the last eight years to one source. Every time I drank too much, dissociated, or quit, I had one thing burrowed in my mind. Everything I was most scared of has happened. In every instance where the choice was binary, me or the other, the other was chosen. Everything I have explicitly asked for was consistently denied. This is true as recently as last night.

The consolation is that there is nothing left to fear. There is not much else to try. There is nothing left to lose.

And for all this, I am never spent. I wake up every morning still breathing, my heart still beating. The embers of forsaken ambition not related to you still smolder in my damp mornings. There is something else, and perhaps there always was.

A weird version of solipsism, at least in the universe of us. I am the only thing I can be sure exists.

## I don't have a third act

**OCTOBER 18, 2024****CATEGORIES: RANTS**

The third act of a story is defined by resolution. The arc of a story is usually quite predictable. Now, what I do when I'm telling a story is take what happens prior to where a third act is supposed to be and pull it down. Further and further until you cannot bare to look. It's beyond even the macabre interest in an accident scene. We dissolve into what we were, and I dissolve into the pain of these characters, but we rarely have an inkling of what we could become.

The second act creates the problem to solve. There is no third act in my story because I don't have any solutions. It keeps happening and happening. And no one is wrong. And there's no escape. There is no plan B. This is just how it is. Worse. This is who you are, who I am. Everyone taps out. Everyone begs with clasped fists. No one is spared. And everything burns. And every tap and clasp will be remembered but ignored.

I feel like my writing is more cubic Picasso or like Mondrian's evolution from landscapes to lines than Renaissance detail. It's arrogant to say but I see The Guernica when I close my eyes after finishing a good paragraph. I know I can do it because I've seen interested in the reduction of forms than layers of perfect replication.

Hi! How can I help you?

I'm writing about a fictional character, can't you tell?

## Four horseman revisited

**OCTOBER 15, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

There are four horsemen of the apocalypse: Famine, Pestilence, War, and Death. Do you know what pestilence means? Hideous infectious disease. Pestilence was first called Conquest. I don't know the philosophical implications of that, but I think it's funny.

You would think Death would get the black horse, and you would be wrong. That belongs to Famine. Death rides the pale horse. Pestilence on white and War on red makes way more sense. I love to read things I don't believe and know them better than people who do. Cherubs aren't fat little babies, they're three-headed monsters with heads of a lion, eagle, and human. Angels don't have wings. And the only time the devil manifests in the world as a tangible creature is as a serpent to Eve in Genesis. No horns, no red suit, no pitchfork. Usually just a disembodied voice. #smallpoxblanket #dismemberinglahui #alohabetrayed

## Random email

**OCTOBER 9, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

"The recurring presence of drama in my life recently is evidence of my complicity in its creation. And when it already exists I'm just as likely to aggravate it as I am to defuse it. Whatever is actually happening, I'm too close to having developed a meaningful insight yet. But on a visceral level, I can tell you that whatever the cause, the symptoms are painful and I hate the way it feels."

"Are you really emailing that to me at work?"

"You're missing the point."

## Assholes that are sometimes heroes

**OCTOBER 3, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

Hi! How can I help you?

Life doesn't just happen. We choose our own realities. How we act and what we believe are

ultimately choices. There are a million ways life can happen. We don't just make one choice to be a hero or an asshole. We make little choices every second of every day. And a few years of those million little million choices make you an asshole or a hero. Most of us are c students and we fall in between. Heroes that are sometimes assholes. More often we're assholes that are sometimes heroes.

## Evolutionary hindsight

**SEPTEMBER 27, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

I never thought there'd come a day when 25 would seem so irritatingly young. I remember being on the school bus when I was eight or nine and we'd go from lower campus at Kamehameha to pick up the kids in high school on upper campus. They seemed so old. Now I look at ninth-graders and they seem so tiny. The same transformation has happened with twentysomethings. When you are one? You rule the world. You know every answer. And your way is the right way.

It takes hindsight, I guess, to recalculate and add up all the stupid fucking decisions and the risky behavior that when bulletproof seemed like manifest destiny, but in reality, is mostly the luck of the draw. If I met the me from ages 25 – 35, I would tell him to quit being such an asshole. Think of those that love you. And can you please try to step out of yourself for one second?

My new theory is that it's evolutionary. We need that bravado and sluttiness to propagate our genes. But at what cost? I'm not that old, really. But I see more clearly things in other people that I don't like. And what you hate the most in others? Is really what you hate most about yourself.

## Pua mēlia

**SEPTEMBER 27, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: POETRY, REDUX**

I walk to the store and I can smell the magnolias as the stench permeates the misty morning. I don't see the sun. The smell suggests the plumerias from home. Almost a stink sweet. But for some reason, the magnolias stink like death, like the slow burn of a Southern dying melancholy. Plumerias, so common, so complex, represent the opposite in my nose's eye. The sap bleeding from the picked flowers or broken branches that ooze white life.

Hi! How can I help you?

Like the rebirth of long-awaited airport greetings, or high school graduates buried in flora. It is the surging force of beauty and occasion, of celebration and happy.

## Sentient gorillas

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

This life isnt easy. Gazelles don't have it easy. Eventually 80% will get eaten by lions or hyenas. Honest to Buddha, I just watched a documentary on it. We are sentient gorillas. Look at a gorilla and try not to say fuck he looks remarkably like me. If you try to kill him he won't like it. Probably put up a fight. They're really strong so in this scenario he probably kills you. But after you're dead do you think he thinks about tomorrow? Or death? Or why his gorilla girlfriend fucked another gorilla? This is hard to understand, but the Buddha teaches us it only hurts because you want it. That doesn't mean you shouldn't care. Everything is transient. In this life you will lose everything and then will lose your life. Wanting more will bring you to your knees. I promise you. It all goes away. The sun will go away after it eats the earth. It's sad to think about because you're attached to your life. No matter how it ends? It will end. Friends will lie. Your children will disappoint you. Your lovers will leave. That is how it is. If you live 2 years or 200 years, in the span of forever, what's the difference? That's not a call to nihilism. What's the point? You have five minutes on this spoiling, rotted globe. Why hurt other sentient gorillas if you can help it? Why hurt yourself? Dumb question. Everyone is killing themselves. What you eat, what you breathe, who you fuck. You're not getting out of here alive. This sounds shitty. But my point is, and this was a long-winded way to say it, be nice.

## California king

**SEPTEMBER 2, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY**

I wake up on the floor in the only bedroom of my apartment. I'm parallel to the bed, but facing the wrong way. The lights are on. The fan is barely spinning; its movement looks almost accidental, as if it were being driven by exhalation rather than electricity. As consciousness slowly returns I am aware of a pain radiating down my right leg, starting with a serrated, stabbing sensation in my hip and ending with burning, near-numb needles in my purplish big toe. My left ankle literally feels like it's on fire, but I'm unable to sit up and c

Hi! How can I help you?

to use the footboard of my bed to pull me to my knees, but the p

heap between the bed and the wall. Just before hitting the ground, I decide it was a mistake to squeeze a king size bed into such a small room. The bedroom furniture was one of the few concessions I was granted in the divorce, however, and I was determined to enjoy the Pyrrhic victory.

## The Ben Folds Five

**SEPTEMBER 2, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY**

The band is actually a trio, but I guess you have to be a fan to get the joke. Reinhold Messner is hard for me to listen to, even though I love it. It's too close to home and too near the bone. I never tempt the past with Muse or the Weakerthans. I remember when we were a secret, when it was dangerous and beautiful. I remember the fire drill when we stood in the stairwell and I stole a hand squeeze, and we spoke innuendoes about sex and corporeal delight by quoting song lyrics.

I sometimes feel like I've lost that ability to yearn. When celebrities die, I subtract my age from theirs. The number keeps getting smaller.

## Ancient crimes

**AUGUST 30, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, REDUX**

I would have thought by now. And this still happens. Young girls. Half-naked and three-quarters wasted. I can still see patterns. I can tell the turntable is on repeat. Okay, you may be too young for the turntable reference. The CD was on replay and if you're too young for that reference I will immediately walk to to the bathroom and hit my liver in the face. But why are you are having me explain there was vinyl before mp3s? What made you listen to my bullshit? No platitudes. That means when you're trying to be profound when you're being condescending. Fuck. Life.

"Why are you here?"

"I want you."

God, if I could be 25 forever. "No, you don't want me. You want the idea of me. I like the idea of you. This has to stop."

Hi! How can I help you?

That happened. Most of it was in my head when she was next to me. Crimes are caused because of her beauty. I literally talk to myself like a crazy person. Why does she keep talking to me?

## The lonely ant in us

**AUGUST 14, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

The meaning of life comes to me sporadically. I wish I could hold it. I guess it's value comes in being unholdable. Who am I really? I don't really matter. I'm not being dramatic. I smashed an ant today. It wasn't on purpose. I like everything to live as long as it can. And then I saw that I am that ant. Fragile and lost. Walking among the many, but probably scared. And actually alone.

## Deaf, blind, and mute

**AUGUST 14, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

I was blind because I was deaf. I was both to everyone that looked or listened. I was chasing numb. I won the race. Numb is so slow it looks stupid when you grab it. It's so easy to buy, it's so easy to ask for. It's almost like something wants it to happen.

## Home to Beaumont

**JULY 15, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

I do remember that night. We were on the patio, so you existed in half light. Coffee. SoCo. Late-night Austin. So beautiful and sad you were. You knew what your part was. I asked who you stayed with when you went home to Beaumont. "I don't want to talk about that." The internet churns. I already knew. I saw the picture. I swallowed my tongue and we laughed at Greg Giraldo. Most of the time? Sex usually doesn't mean anything except how it feels. But it always turns the dial.

## Why bother?

**JULY 8, 2024**

Hi! How can I help you?

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

It doesn't have to happen because it already happened. My love, I wish I understood. It's always just happening. It has always already happened. Yes or no is just a question because you asked. The honest answer is yes but also no. It changes faster than the literal speed of light. Much faster than I can explain. Indeed, time is a construct. We have taken the arbitrary distance this planet travels around the sun and called it a year. We measured the distance this globe makes during one revolution and called it a day. Then we divided that day into arbitrary parts, and divided those parts into smaller parts. Then we kept dividing. There is nothing inherently true about a nanosecond that we did not arrogantly declare to be true. What is has always been whether or you or I bothered to notice.

## Stubborn thorns

**JULY 7, 2024****CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Here's another irony. When I'm calm the things I say cause the most chaos. I'm just riffing. I like how words feel in my mouth. My girlfriend called me disgusting over some bad poetry. Feel the divine, dear. I can change if it helps you love me. I can't change the word no. That one is a stubborn thorn.

## Vocabulary is a handicap

**JULY 1, 2024****CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

There was an emptiness with her. It was a squalid, bleak emptiness without her. She prompted existential questions. Is this it? And then I found the lack of her prompts troubling. Who the fuck uses the word squalid? Who even knows what that means? Vocabulary is a handicap. You can't feel something if you can't think it. But what if you can think of everything? Walk in my parade for this block.

## Count your breaths

**JUNE 30, 2024****CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

Hi! How can I help you?



Our capacity for weakness is clearly demarcated. The weird part is how close is it to greatness. Put down the drink. Say another word. And the play ends differently. It doesn't have to end insanely. Pull in your arms. Count your breaths. Try to sleep. Ignore the noises. Especially they voices. Pull in your arms. Count your breaths. And sleep.

## Adam and Eve

**JUNE 29, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, REDUX**

It's best not to begin with Adam and Eve. Original sin is baffling. Besides, kids are scared of naked people holding apples. Start with the talking snake. Kids like animals. Children like what animals have to say. Let him hiss for a while. They'll figure him out in the end. Describe sin as suffering and leave it at that. Steer clear of confessionals. Children associate them with toilets. They'll be able to describe it soon enough. If they feel the need to apologize, tell them the moon is there to forgive. As for the priest, let him sleep. He's less dangerous that way.

## The ghost of you

**JUNE 21, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

The ghost of you is horrific and often returns to me in dreams. Even to this day. Even last night. And so it can't be real. You in my dreams must represent something else. There is nothing visceral left between us. Any physical pleasure your body brought mine has been forgotten. The mind is a terrible thing to taste and even harder to erase.

## Until something goes wrong

**JUNE 21, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

I wish to think that we're not just slaves to dopamine and serotonin levels. The cynic in me recognizes chemicals and their resulting imbalances. The part of me still capable of tricking the rest cries, "Love!" I listen to songs or I read poems and the words shuck and jive, as they should, but sometimes one or three land a punch to the celiac plexus and still manage to draw my breath. Just like the literal and metaphoric heart, the diaphragm is a muscle that might work forever without your notice. Until something goes wrong.

Hi! How can I help you?

# Hold it

**JUNE 20, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

Now that you have done it, see if you can hold it. What are you really losing? And anything you lose, anything you feel about this is completely within yourself, and therefore completely within your control. The actual pain is long gone. Nothing you do can ever turn that past into a win—nothing short of a miracle anyway. And there's no point in making her lose too. She's doing a pretty good job of fucking up her life without you. You can't save her, especially because she doesn't want you to, but you can save yourself.

Don't feel bad, there's nothing to feel bad about. She will only recreate the worst of you in her mind no matter what really happened. She will keep giving the benefit of the doubt to the people just using her to fuck.

You are real; there is no taking away what you are and what you've done. It cannot be cleansed. You cannot change anymore. If this ever has a chance she would need to be the one that has to change. I swear I swear I swear I hope I'm wrong, but I've been right with everything else.

## Full color at high speed with no filter

**JUNE 16, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

I've asked myself what it is, and I guess it's more a kind of darkness. There was enough distraction when I was younger and preoccupied in the establishment of a life, that I was able to ignore it, with situational exceptions. Other proclivities like sex and alcohol sometimes made it feel like there wasn't even anything to worry about. What I've come to learn is that unhealthy sexual shenanigans (if they even exist), or alcohol, or sometimes drugs, were not in and of themselves the disease, but were, in fact, the telling symptoms of something far more dangerous that was just waiting for me with its gangrenous soul, and sad, sad heart. But, oh so pretty to look at.

I guess my misguided attempts to always live in full color at high speed with no filter, and in possession of a ferocious, single-minded intensity I sometimes

my life became double-edged, semi-charmed, yet, more and m

Hi! How can I help you?

say that I've been to more cities than I can count on Trip Advisor know more about the subtle nuances of the human condition than I had previously thought was possible, felt deeper feelings (good and bad) than anyone I know not suffering with a serious mental illness, and been in situations that I know most people will never see, want to visit, or even believe exist. (I can't tell you how many times I've found myself in a random house or hotel room at three in the morning with some random Mary Magdalene, contemplating what to do next and thinking to myself, "How in the fuck did I end up at this moment, in this place, watching what I'm watching? What's my play here?") But everything bad that happened was happening too often to be a coincidence. Is still happening in some respects. When the darkness finally rose above, it came swifter and stayed longer than I thought was possible, and consequently damaged and collaterally damaged much more than I could pretend not to care about; everything in its reach got and gets caught in its velvet web

The argument can be made that my experiences have helped make me the person that I am. And for the most part that's a good thing. I love madly, forgive quickly, feel empathy deeply, laugh hard when I'm happy or sad, make others laugh and smile, and easily make real connections with people. But there's an opposite side to that same coin that doesn't sound like charisma, though it has as its source the same dark energy. I catch myself crying spontaneously at almost nothing, hurt intensely with an emotional paralysis, wander the streets lost and lonely, and strike back hard with words when I feel that I've been damaged intentionally. Yet I know that I don't do evil things because I'm not inherently evil. I take action that looks evil not with premeditation, but by following the paths of least resistance and instant gratification, without regard for any consequences, good or bad, until they happen.

Someone I love dearly spoke of me once to another person I loved dearly (when I wasn't there) saying to her, "He's super smart, kind, and engaging when he's in the mood, and seductive as he wants to be. But there is a dark side." At the time I was mad at that spilled, heretical revelation. But it's difficult, disingenuous, and ultimately pointless to speak anger to truth.

## Lost highways

**JUNE 3, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, REDUX**

She lifts her dress up to her knees and walks barefoot to the pool. Those delicate feet. I've had them in my mouth. Clean from the shower I tasted the feel of her skin. I want that feeling on you want. I hate that she said that to anyone else. But I understand. We all want that feeling on

Hi! How can I help you?

touch. That moment of excitement when you feel wanted. So it hurts but I'm not mad. I'm mad at me. But in a way, we're all mad at ourselves. This one is not the same. It honestly felt there was a god when she came out of the stupid internet. Then she was real. Then she cried because I hurt her. Then she laughed because I'm funny. Then she said I wasn't funny anymore.

She makes me want to listen to Hank Williams and understand lost highways. I don't think she knows who Hank Williams is.

## Specific unmet needs

**APRIL 16, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: BUMPER STICKERS, FICTION, RANTS**

I trust my dreams in a way I don't trust myself. In my head, I am a pathological liar. I know better. My dreams know better. It eschews pronouncements. And instead suggests a tone and other vagaries. The familiar hurt that doesn't shake. Still hours next to you. Sleep finally dies. In the dark. Eyes closed, the feeling remains. I can hear your breath. I can feel your naked skin. They fail to reassure. "Your touch repulses me." Only spoken in a dream sounds like something you might say. If you weren't holding back. If you didn't think this way is easier. And only temporary. You turn your back to me and lie flat on your stomach. "It's how I like it." But it's not. That's not how it ever was when it really was how you liked it. I wonder how you were two months ago. When you were looking for it. And how it would be if you didn't still have specific unmet needs.

## Evil Dead 2 again gives life lessons

**APRIL 5, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

So many things in pop culture, and so many things that surround me currently, have exacerbated my normal obsession with mortality. Which, counterintuitively, has made me thankful for the life I have left. There are so many things I've been mad about for so long now, and so much damage I've done to my life by honoring that anger. Until relatively recently I believed it to be righteous, when, in fact, it was self-righteous. It's like that scene in Evil Dead 2 when Ash thinks he's choking an evil, undead antagonist, but when he looks over his shoulder into a mirror he's actually choking himself.

Hi! How can I help you?

I'm grateful though for the things I have and have had, even if some of them, at least for now, are lost. I'm grateful for the times that life could have punished me, but instead, let me off with a warning. I'm even grateful for the times I wasn't guilty but was treated as if I was. I've learned the hard way how to deal with these situations should they arise in the future, and they will.

My son-shared birthday is next Tuesday so as a present to myself I've been watching videos of him and his sister from the impossibly cute and precious ages between three and five when I was lucky enough to be a daily part of their lives.

I am melancholic, but I am grateful.

## Dead leaves and the dirty ground

**MARCH 22, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Love, or any of these other huge emotional factors that matter so much in our lives often involve a chosen, shared cognitive dissonance that manifests in dysfunction, sadness, and pain. Why do we do this? Why do we spend so much energy looking in one direction when we're running in the other?

The dead leaves. The clutter. The things that seem to matter so much at the moment. Why do we have self-awareness, but are unable to step out of ourselves? Why the impatience? Why the impotence?

## Sepsis moves quickly

**MARCH 8, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

I thought I wouldn't make it without stealing. When I was walking down the hill. And I was thinking to myself that Dr. Dre was a genius. He rapped over a tuba. That doesn't seem important. It's literally seven notes over and over. Then he gets Eminem when he was still manic and high to say fuck god and scream and scream and lose his mind. And those seven notes make sense. Bah. Bah bah. Bah bah. Bah bah. I digress. I'm walking down the hill. I feel fibrillation. The subtle vibrations of pre-seizure. My fingers cramp, my hamstrings buzz. They shake but only I know they're shaking. I think about Shakespeare and soliloquies and

Hi! How can I help you?

walk just walk. The veins get pronounced. And walking takes a kind of tactile acuity with my toes. Fall and stand. I vomit quickly so no one notices. Then buy ice cream so I look normal. I buy a razor and shave to look younger. I clench so I don't pee in my pants. The auditory hallucinations become scary. They go from noises to voices. I try to sleep when I finally close my eyes. Just try. The voices say worse things. They are equally unhelpful. Her voice plays on repeat. This is fiction but everything actually happened. I may have a few details wrong. I can tell you the color of the vomit. It was oily and almost green and some of it came out of my nose. Its viscosity made me consider my condition. Opaque mucous means slow down, but stop at your discretion. Green-yellow is the rot on a scab. Be aware of it. Take action if it turns black.

## The way I was

**MARCH 8, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY**

You don't know me like I was. The me when I was corporate. It's why I was always welcome and always rehired through my myriad proclivities. You never understood my value and it's why you wrongfully think I have no ambition. I am loyal. I am political to a fault. In that world I only know resilience and survival. I eat people I don't like or who I think are unhelpful. I will sabotage your bungee cord and return your smile when you jump. I'm much much softer now. There are still teeth in my mouth and bile in my gut.

## Guttural

**MARCH 5, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

This system is broken but not because we can't see the symptoms; those are remarkably obvious. We ask the wrong questions. We're so busy asking what words to use that we forget to ask why write? Words are what makes us different from the other apes. Chimpanzees can drink ants through makeshift draws. They masturbate and cheat on their chimpanzee girlfriends and wives. The similarities. Modern humans are more eloquent, not quite refined; we have commandeered the larynx. Guttural groans eventually became poetry. But Shakespeare is not possible without the first caterwauls. The noises that sprang forth from that almost human. Cautiously translated to, "That one is mine." Or, "I fuck her, not you."

And now we go to the moon and fear death.

Hi! How can I help you?

# Two stupid apes

**MARCH 5, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, POETRY**

You asked me what I was afraid of and I couldn't articulate it at the time. This is that. That moment when you wake up to pee and she's warm and asleep and beautiful. Not coincidentally her mouth is closed. And you look at her and think, "Fuck, if this doesn't work then maybe nothing will." How do two stupid apes rub against each other and still not tell you about the time, "I did this and no one else can know?" How can we call each other the worst words we can think of for years? How can we be happy when those words actually work? How do I look at you in all your warm beauty knowing you don't see I'm warm and beautiful too? That you're here because we have this unspoken agreement. That if either one of us were strong enough we'd say maybe this hurts too much. Then I cry and think about my life without you. Wonderful terrible you. And that pang makes me dial. And pick up when you call. I don't know why cows say moo. They just do.

# How nihilism works at 9:17 a.m.

**FEBRUARY 26, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

And all there is to do is grind out one more day. Even when there is no account of trying. Even when there is no celebration of your martyrdom. Even when there is no meeting to report your progress. You do or you don't. Don't and you might live ten years longer and die less painfully. Do and you might not.

# Vinyl

**FEBRUARY 22, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

It's weird, all these things I curated to a greatness in my mid-teens have come 'round to be the defining characteristics in haute couture. You might know the story of how I went to undergraduate Tacoma with nothing but a box of ill-fitting sweaters, two pairs of size-44 Levis 501's (that I squeezed into so I wouldn't have to buy a bigger pair), Kiss to Depeche Mode to Iron Maiden to Nina Simone to Queen

Hi! How can I help you?

to the Escape From New York Soundtrack. I didn't even pack a turntable and wouldn't have one for my first three months in school. I carried all of those albums into a future I had no idea what would bring; they were how I defined a pretty big part of myself. And in just 12 months I would trade all of those albums, at the Jelly's on Pensacola for the promise of about 40 "permanent" compact discs.

The lament I have for that moment is not financial. There are far greater "what-ifs" that would have resulted in far higher values lost or found. At best, those albums might fetch five figures if the collection remained intact, and mostly undamaged (highly unlikely). I lost more selling Apple stock too early (I still made a lot, not life-changing a lot). But that makes for a good story. This one always feels like a blow; a long lost could-have-been. Those albums were me. And I traded them all in for the illusion of a new permanence. I rebuilt that CD collection even larger, and the mp3 collection larger still. But I've never had something in my personal space like those discs.

## Connecting the dots

**FEBRUARY 13, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

I was nine years old when I took my first shot of hard liquor (at an older neighbor's house). I was almost 12 the first time I got drunk (playing quarters in a hotel room in Hilo). A few days after turning 12 was the first time I puked because of too much alcohol (at the Sheraton Waikiki after roaming amongst the tourists at Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center). I was also 12 (it was a big year) the first time I saw cocaine being used at a high-school toga party I somehow got invited to (I skipped a few grades so all my friends were older). I didn't try coke until much later when I was 22.

It was an in-service Monday at Kamehameha, which meant students at my school were off but teachers weren't. I was home alone (my brother was in Catholic pre-school at OLPH, Our Lady of Perpetual Help). All of my neighborhood friends went to public school so they didn't have the day off, and all of my school friends lived hours away by bus. I decided to play pinball at the bowling alley near my house. Some of the older kids on my block were cutting school and noticed me straggling. It was about 10 a.m. but they were already drunk and stoned.

"Kalan, come here." It was Kawika, my friend Kamaki's older brother. He was 14 and already the coolest kid on the block. Long-haired surfer with a paper route. Everyone wanted to be his friend. All the girls were in love with him.

Hi! How can I help you?



mechanics of sex, but not much else. Everyone knew Kawika was already doing it. Kawika had singled me out so, of course I went.

“How come you’re not in school?”

“We’re off today. Some teacher thing. How come you’re not?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “Want to party?” He and I didn’t speak pidgin by default like the others.

I wasn’t really sure what that meant, but it was Kawika. “Sure.”

Inside the living room there were four older boys, two of whom lived on my block, I didn’t recognize the other two. There was a wet, pungent smell that I didn’t recognize as marijuana at the time. On the coffee table was a bottle of vodka, an empty shot glass, and several Michelob beers in dark brown bottles with gold foil and a red logo. I recognized them because it was what my grandfather, my Papa, drank during the day (he drank salty dogs at night). The empty bottles had their foil peeled off and lay in piles on the table. Kawika handed me one of the brown bottles. I had taken sips from Papa’s as long as I could remember (usually to strong encouragement and laughter from the adults), but I had never had one of my own.

He poured the vodka into the shot glass and handed it to me. It looked like water. I recognized the smell from Tūtū’s red-lettered, *The Crow’s Nest* glass at her house. It was liquid but instantly burned. I choked, but didn’t spit it out. There were imagined flames wherever the liquid touched, all the way down and into my chest. My eyes watered. The boys were laughing, but Kawika nodded and smiled. I was in.

My point is certainly not to brag or glamorize, or even to categorize. The point is this, sitting in a psych ward 230 miles from where I was born, can in many ways be traced to that moment. Almost predictable in hindsight. Maybe inevitable. At the very least, there was a traceable connection of dots that might have been broken at countless points, through different, uncountable small decisions, good and bad, over more than half a typical lifetime of a mostly selfish and self-centered path of least resistance. A completely lucid memory of a horrible origin story.

## The greenbelt

**FEBRUARY 13, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

Hi! How can I help you?

I’m writing this from a psych ward 230 miles from where I was born. It’s not as dramatic as it

sounds; I asked to be here. I even asked to stay when they said I was ready for discharge. The sympathetic psychiatrist agreed to leave me in treatment as long as my insurance didn't object. They did not. Unfortunately, the last five days I've been here have been spent in isolation. I managed to somehow contract COVID in a closed ward after a few days here, but remain asymptomatic. I'm a strong believer in the efficacy of vaccines. The other two patients who tested positive apparently are not. I am bored, but they are miserable. For five days straight I've been reading National Geographic from the mid-1980's (the space stuff—even the Earth stuff — is grossly outdated) and Time magazine from the late 2010's just before novel corona virus meant anything to anyone. Unbelievably bored, but I am grateful. I don't mean that sarcastically. It can't be the Wellbutrin, it hasn't been long enough. Maybe it's the Depakote.

Had they discharged me over the weekend, or even Monday, that would have meant living on the streets until Wednesday night when my mother returned from Texas to see my son play Jean Valjean in a school production of *Lés Misarables* (this will be important later). And we all know how that ends. I've done it and survived—I'm writing this aren't I—but being outside means having everything with you stolen when you finally succumb to sleep, and inevitably, always, ends with a death-defying blood alcohol content.

Three times now I've checked myself into a psychiatric facility out of desperation, mostly while in some stage of alcohol-induced psychosis or breakdown. I've learned how to say the right things to get admitted. I don't think I've ever been consciously suicidal, I'm too afraid of dying. But they won't admit you if you're just desperate. There was a bullshit, involuntary 72-hour hold in those harried weeks after Linda moved out so many years ago. She called the police from work and said I was threatening to jump off a bridge. I was not. I sent her pictures from the overpass near our apartment on my way walking to the liquor store across Mopac (my intent was to capture a stylized disarray). It was literally the quickest route.

I suppose I had been poking myself all morning with the tip of a blunt steak knife before I decided I needed more vodka, but that was just to feel something. Suicidal ideation? Not even close. I wasn't imagining any scenarios.

I was at the pool when the police got there, they had been searching for me in the Greenbelt. I saw the helicopter, but I didn't make the connection until four officers emerged from the underbrush abutting my complex. When they took me back to the apartment, a cop noticed blood on my sheets. And not just drops. So they took me to Shoal Creek. I wasn't under arrest, but I wasn't free to say no. And as I would come to learn the ps

Hi! How can I help you?

pre-trial detention, like emergency room hallways as you wait for a bed, like rehab and intensive outpatient, like life when it's not shitty or great, is mostly wasting time.

## Days go by (and still I think of you)

**FEBRUARY 10, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

Every day is easier; every hour passes smoother. I keep cheating on total no-contact. I lie to myself when I see her text and respond because "this is important," or "I'm worried about what's going to happen to her." I do, of course, but that's not why I hit send. Nothing has fundamentally changed. I respond because I miss the contact. A text from her is like a methadone fix to stave off the withdrawal effects of not talking for days. I miss it but don't really. Especially when it's happening. A small part of me even wants to send this in a text, but I know it wouldn't make a difference. She'd probably have to re-read it and concentrate to even know this is about her because I'm not using her name. This last trip went well—New Year's—there was no arguing or bickering. She hid me from her regulars at Aki Beach and 604; she stayed in the car at Tamura's while I bought her wine and groceries for dinner. She wasn't even hiding her disrespect. If I ever want this relationship to be even cordial, it has to be completely reset. This is a textbook example of a sunk-cost fallacy; I am not getting those eight years back, and the ends can never justify the means.

## The light

**FEBRUARY 2, 2024**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

I needed the light. I can usually write in the dark. When I was seven, my bedtime was seven, when I was eight it was eight, and so on. I was still Catholic then, so it took a long time to say prayers, and ask God to bless everyone and for eternity. I would squint under the blanket and write shitty poems about gothic, Catholic monsters outside the blanket that protected me. The real monsters didn't have horns or wings or pointy tales. They had nice dispositions most of the time and their fists didn't always hurt. Just at first.

## Del Valle

**DECEMBER 26, 2023**

Hi! How can I help you?

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, REDUX**

With my eyes closed, laying on two shirts spread out on the grass, I can feel the breeze blowing over my shirtless torso and tousling my hair. The warming sun colors my closed eyelids an orange-pink, the smell of cut grass abounds, the wind whistles. The sensations are so sensually pleasant, that it's almost possible to ignore the chain-link fence, topped all around with countless outstretched, razorwire Slinky's. For one hour a day the divide between here and there dissolves so that it's difficult to discern the difference. These past few days I've felt better than I have in months, maybe years. A few difficult decisions, now decided, and the whole world has become a better place. And though I may eventually come to regret what these have wrought, their sum effect cannot possibly be as bad as things have been since that night of the epiphany, now almost three years past, that soon-to-be-famous moment of existential angst.

## Words

**DECEMBER 19, 2023****CATEGORIES: RANTS**

They feel like so much what you're saying when you're saying them. They feel like the world. They are ephemeral and can only, by definition, last long as they are remembered. And unless they are written down, they are always remembered incorrectly. And when they are written down, they are quoted incorrectly. If I punch you in the face, you will remember that a lot longer than some careful, clever phrase I manufactured and said alone.

It's a classic contradiction. Unavoidable as it is true. People don't give a shit about you, no matter who you are. They give a huge shit about themselves. If you can impact that with a word or three, then you are special. Most can't, won't, or even try. I do. And it's looking up at the stars because I make as much difference to how fast the Milky Way spins as to how you'll respond to a question.

What else can I do? It's all I know. It's all I want. You can't always get what you want. You rarely do. But you can be smart, and when that millimeter opens? You can shut it. And then it's one millimeter less. One millimeter at a time. Until it's the universe.

## Be quiet

**DECEMBER 12, 2023****CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

Hi! How can I help you?

Closed eyes are elusive as a villain. They hate you. Your eyes want your eyes open. They want you to beg for mercy. There are things you can do to shut their mouth, but in the long run are not in anyone's best interest.

Turn off the lights and count down from 100. I can never get to 80. The lovers I've loved the most are like magic. Sleep is easy and something to want. The pillow is a soporific. There is no countdown when you love what you are, or at least what you're being. There is no number high enough for me.

It would be hard to sleep for fifteen days. I've tried. My record staying up is seven. I was hearing music that wasn't playing.

The mind is a strange thing. Terrible and beautiful. Everyone knows the audacious tries that the mind will do when it's asked. Unfortunately, many have seen the mind crumble. I used to read these books about spirit, and the conclusion was that mind is physiological. You break the mind, and you break thought. Spirit, if it exists, has to go beyond the physical. What makes me? What makes you you?

Being awake is why there can never be quiet.

## Apophenia revisited

**DECEMBER 9, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: REDUX**

Apophenia. That is the human tendency toward connection of unrelated phenomena where none exists. Toward creating patterns, even when none really exists. Trying to bring order to chaos perhaps is what separates us from being an animal. I suppose there are other things, but other primates don't seem much concerned with the correlation versus causation debate. Bonobos will go down on each other, and chimpanzees will rip your face off, but neither group seems too concerned with voting districts or feminism.

The rate of divorce in Maine correlates almost perfectly with the rate of consumption of margarine in the rest of the country. And that's not even the strangest example of almost perfect correlation. The number of letters in the winning word of the national spelling bee and people killed by venomous spiders. Almost perfectly the same. The point of talking about this? Many people find a cause and effect here. Don't eat margarine.

Hi! How can I help you?

divorce? Her marriage is doomed. Don't spell long words, or you might kill someone with a spider bite.

These examples are ridiculous. Life is ridiculous. And the same impetus that suggests to a certain element that mass killings or 9/11 or Kennedy assassinations happened for a larger purpose, will also suggest this ridiculousness. It's part of the human condition. These patterns that exist or don't, that are recognized or not, that are true or false. To anyone that believes them, they are as real as God, or as oxygen in the air, or as subatomic truth or infrared light. The argument, of course, is just because it cannot be sensed, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. A negative proof shifts the burden, right or wrong, to the skeptic. And a lack of evidence becomes a virtue, not a deficit.

I think we all know better. I do.

## MxUxG

**DECEMBER 5, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY**

I've been to a million parties in my life. I've only given names to three. I've spoken here previously about Mean Ugly Guys (MxUxGx, pronounced mug like the root beer, who became Chokebore with reasonable success in Europe), and the Rastafaris and Laurie; that one is The Party Laurie Gave Out 97 invitations in Waikiki before we saw Who's That Girl with Madonna at Waikiki 3 when they still had actual theaters and not 300-screen complexes and she promised to go easy. Very cool 'zine-style invite. We had 100. When we got back to the car, "How many invites are left?" "3." And the dice were cast. Was it a good idea to have mud wrestling in a kiddie pool because I wanted to see Nicole in a bikini? In hindsight, probably not. But, people still talk about that party 33 years later; most of it sounds like a lie, but I was there. And it happened. It happened.

Lo, tangentially related to our mind set, remember midnight Rocky Horror at the Queen Theater in Kaimuki and walking in early to the porn scenes from Caligula? Let's do the Time Warp.

There was the Godzilla party; so named because there was a six-foot inflatable Godzilla in the pool. And all the drunk, mostly hot, haole Kalaheo girls stood smoking and drinking in feathered hair fading 80's glory. Whoever's house it was, ate some serious shit because her parents came home in the middle of it to find their yippy dogs yipping in the h  
 them in the course of the party. I'm pretty sure we were in Aika...

Hi! How can I help you?

when the blue lights flashed. H3, then Alan's Bridge. But on our way out, I did see the biggest asshole who ever was, Officer Bohol of Honolulu's finest. Uncompromising and jealous of the life force of teenagers. Earlier that year he had issued me a no seat belt ticket and asked me how tall I was.

"Height?" "Five, ten." "No. You five, eight." "Then why'd you ask?" He scraped my face with my driver's license. Later that year or maybe the next, after the MUG party, he punched my friend Dylan at Alan's Bridge. Long story short the guy was a dick.

The third party was Megan White Fox. It was the first time I ever smelled sex. And the first time I'd ever seen cocaine. Megan was this super-hot, impossibly blonde white girl at a time I still self-identified as brown.

So it all makes sense.

## Tampa General

**NOVEMBER 30, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Back in 2012, I was dead for 12 hours in Tampa, at Tampa General. Not dead really. If you're alive now you were never actually dead. Unresponsive and with no ID, they cut my only pants off. I was minutes from not waking up. I woke with a foley coming out of me and an urge to urinate. I pulled at the tube.

"No, you don't want to pull that out."

"Where are my pants?"

"They had to cut them off. Don't pull that out. I promise you're not going to like it." I pull it out. He's right. Fire shoots up and down my penis with every breath. Still no urine.

"I need pants."

"What?"

"What day is it?"

"Tuesday. You came on Sunday."

"Fuck. I need pants." Breathe. It's only time. It's supposed to go by. "I need pants."

"You can't leave."

"I'm leaving. I need pants."

Hi! How can I help you?

“You’ll be leaving AMA.”

“I don’t care what I am. I don’t know where I am. I need pants.”

And this is how I ended up in New Port Richey. I suppose I should have been scared of alligators or snakes, even wandering, hungry pumas existed in the vicinity. But I grabbed some half-length blue scrubs, took an actual piss, walked to Target and bought some sweatpants and a bottle of wine (no vodka at Target in Florida), then crawled into the woods.

The weird part is that this actually happened. Florida incites the crazy, and at this point of my life I didn’t need incitation.

The whole point of this story is not my past insanity or the consequences of mainlining fifths of vodka straight to your esophagus after missing your Greyhound to Sarasota. My point was, in my customary roundabout way, about death, or near-death. For me, there was no white light. There was nothing. And then there was the monitor’s beeping representation of my tachycardic heartbeat as my eyes opened. I’m super convinced when you’re gone that’s it. This experience convinced me. It wasn’t sad. I didn’t feel sad. It was nothing. Like the 14 billion years or so before my third birthday and conscious memory. It was just nothing.

My mom hates stories like this.

## Swollen

**NOVEMBER 13, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: POETRY**

Mountains swollen to the left and right,  
Clouds kiss their noses at the tip,  
The face is visible.  
Green and wet and living.  
Ignorant of reality, I suck through a straw jammed in my mouth.  
Everything I am is resistance.

## Hopkins

**OCTOBER 12, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

Hi! How can I help you?



I was flailing and was destructively apathetic about collateral damage. If I was in pain, then I didn't care if everyone involved, and anyone standing too closely, was as well. Which, of course, is such an immature attitude that I'm embarrassed to admit that for several hours (and by hours, I mean years, mean life) I acted within that context.

## How do you sleep?

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

No really. How do you sleep? It's probably so far removed from you unless I bring it to bear. And instead of a blanket, you've always thrown poison. When I was younger, handsomer, and dumber we might have ended up in bed together. Now we end up in front of judges talking about things he's heard a million times and could give two shits about and wants to make it go away and the boy is usually the bad guy. I've gotten super broken, but way smarter in the last four years. I'm not a dumb person. In fact, I would say the opposite. Ex-parte may be the worst you can do under new duress. Spend four years at the law library. Watch how courts run. Then it changes. It's not Law and Order. But everything has patterns. And 90% of outcomes aren't the same by coincidence. For the record, I never believed in coincidences. The next time, it's not going to be the same. I just want to know how do you sleep? I did it with alcohol and Drive-By Truckers or The National songs that I had heard that reminded I'm really not the only one. Isn't that one religions are? To hear your life being said by another. How do you sleep?

## I get to judge

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

There are two kinds of hard rock fans. The first enjoy Brian Johnson's vocals, as do I. We all loved Back in Black. The second remember when Bon Scott came out with bagpipes and a kilt. That guy gave zero fucks. And Angus Young was thrashing half naked even as a boy dressed like a schoolboy because he was one. Then Kiss blew up and merchandised everything that a logo fits on. And Ozzy was snorting ants in the parking lot on a dare because he said he would do anything, and he certainly did even more than that. I understand that impulse. "You can't possibly swallow that whole thing." "Give it to me. Right now. Give it to me." "I don't think that's safe." "Now you're the voice of reason? Give it to me." Oh yeah, Moto

Hi! How can I help you?

looked down from the microphone and made punks look like hippies, which in a way they are. I have the word punk tattooed across my neck. I get to judge.

## Suedehead

**JUNE 26, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

Morrissey seems like a diva and a difficult prick (these seem to be conflicting metaphors, but I assure you they are not), in a way that far outreaches his relatively low level of fame. He's aristocracy to the fifty-something, post-punk refugees that got bullied by Mötley Crüe fans back in the day, but almost unknown outside of that relatively small block. Don't get me wrong, I love the Smiths, and like Morrissey's solo career (though he did hit an early high-water mark with Suedehead), and if I ever met him, I would probably be apologetic for writing these thoughts, but still, I think they're truer than not. If you're famous, it's entirely your responsibility to control your spin. And in this case, he has done a poor job. The few people that even care have only heard the horror stories of him abandoning shows after a handful of songs because the backstage menu wasn't vegan, or some other absurd reason.

## Instant karma

**MAY 31, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Be here to love, otherwise everything is speculation. I'm not here to be angry, though given the right circumstance I can usually be counted on to be so. Old behavior is extrapolated into guesses about what will happen. Vague memories have a way of becoming hard truth. Everyone knows what happened, but everyone knows differently, passionately. There are no witnesses that have actually seen anything except what they've heard. Credibility is a measure more valuable than a credit score. It means more than the truth.

Nothing happens without an equal and opposite reaction. Lies beget lies. Sorrow makes things sad. Revenge makes retaliation inevitable. I'm not interested in propagating any of that. I realize my choices might put me in the background for now. I've never stayed there before. Why would I?

Hi! How can I help you?

What's happening outside is not an ever after. Things will get worse before they get better. But things will change.

It always has a way of coming around.

# Fibonacci

**MAY 31, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

$$F_{\{n\}} = F_{\{n-1\}} + F_{\{n-2\}}$$

Tell me how connected the numbers three and five are. Closer than you and I ever were. On so many levels, by so many definitions. I dabble in these things. The truth in numbers. The truth in big and small. Quantum theory makes more sense to me than any catechism ever did. Fibonacci sequences seem to predict much more than mere numbers. This is beyond a set of fun puzzles to solve, but rather seem to be the key to something more real than the first ridiculous miracle at Canaa. With the exceptions of 1, 8 and 144, every Fibonacci number has a prime factor that is not a factor of any smaller Fibonacci number. I find this to be far more miraculous than alleged water into wine. That seems like a myth told in the parlance of the times in which it was written.

But the sequence has always been the same; it exists independent of time or even consciousness. The numbers keep getting bigger and never repeat, and you, like the Earth as I blast into space, keep getting smaller and smaller and smaller.

**MAY 27, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: BUMPER STICKERS, RANTS**

$$e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$$

The story of its original proof fascinates me. Squish together two infinitely non-repeating, irrational, transcendental numbers and an imaginary idea in the correct way and they equal -1. Then slowly prove it over decades by calculating the sine and cosine of the theta angle of thousands of triangles on an x/y plane and realize they are getting closer to your result. Then make the leap to infinity and realize the infinitesimal difference between your answer and -1 can be ignored. I can watch this being done in seconds on YouTube Hi! How can I help you? level of obstinate, compulsive focus is hard to believe but an impulse I definitely understand. So

now I'm getting a masters degree because I was transfixed by this formula. I tattooed it on my right forearm so it is never out of sight.



## Jolene

**MAY 27, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

So it happened on one of those days when we weren't really together. Nowadays, that was almost every day. And the calculus of our expected fidelity was never quite calculated anyway. But there was a new glint of something in the reflection of the sun on one of those days. That's the point, I mean. It only happened because it was one of those days.

I had drinks with a Bumble or Hinge named Jolene, and the first thing I thought to myself, was that she was nothing like the song. Nonetheless, when she spoke, I found myself enjoying listening to her. Maybe the Ray LaMontagne version. That might actually be the perfect allusion, though I always hate when writers I like make allusions to songs I've never heard. It is, in fact, how I learned about Nina Simone when I was 15, so there's that. Always exceptions.

Hi! How can I help you?

# Long way down

**MAY 27, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, REDUX**

The ledge. I remember talking you down from there once or twice. That might be the difference between you and me. You came down.

I'm not quite sure if I enjoy the sweaty-palm excitement of maybe almost falling. More likely the culprit is complacency. A person can get used to almost anything. And after this much time, one might wonder if I didn't prefer the heights.

It sure does seem a long way down though.

# Ways back

**MAY 14, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

Love to me is a filter. Love to me says, "Baby, just shut your mouth." You and I have come to separate visions of the same truth. You are trying to find peace. I am trying to provoke it.

I was your lifeline out, and you were mine back in, and that was okay. And now it's not. It's about as far away from okay as you can stand.

# Brown Bags to Stardom 1987

**APRIL 19, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY**





## Brown Bags

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=wCq6-zLrKFk>



Hi! How can I help you?

# I've been everywhere

**APRIL 16, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

The number one song in the country at the moment of my birth, just finishing up a six-week run at the position, was *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Sort of. That week, officially on the Saturday after I was born, the number one song became *Let It Be*. I find that two-song playlist oddly appropriate to my next 50+ years.

I started listening to Simon and Garfunkel on Spotify and it reminded me of my life in the '80s and '90s. I can't count how many times I criss-crossed the country. "Kathy, I'm lost," I said, though I knew she was sleeping. "I'm empty and aching and I don't know why." But I did know why. And I do know why.

It's a cliché to repeat how songs invoke memories. I can't listen to Band of Horses without seeing J flit back and forth across the bathroom, momentarily visible in panties and my t-shirt, then disappearing from view. I can't hear the Hold Steady without remembering looking at the back of my hand staring drunkenly at the veins and noticing how empty my hand seemed. "Sometimes she thinks she sees these things, right before they're happening" was the repeated soundtrack driving under the influence to work, simultaneously struggling through my divorce. And I can't play Simon and Garfunkel without also hearing the clacking of train tracks or the groaning of diesel-engined Greyhounds riding across the plains in the middle of the night, stopping in cities so small there was only a snack machine in the depot to get a bite, and crossroads with a flashing yellow light in lieu of one that changed from red to yellow to green.

I was on Trip Advisor the other day and I got bored of clicking when I had hit 500 cities, towns, and hamlets in America, Canada, and Mexico. Johnny Cash sang "I've been everywhere" and between two precise latitudes, it seems so have I. "We've all gone to look for America." And so we have. What did we find? What did I find? You?

## Memories of Jaron's

**APRIL 16, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY**

You won't remember this. There was a place once called Jaron's

Hi! How can I help you?

such a thing as privilege, I had it here. These names are real. I was just off the plane from Texas with a black, felt Stetson and a shirt that said “Listen to Black Sabbath” and I meant them both. We had crab cakes and whatever was on tap. I was drunk on the plane. Now, it was just a slip. The bouncer knew me from ’93, the bartender was my cousin, and his wife ran the kitchen. I was, as much as any place, home. The band that night was ‘Ale’a, sweet voiced in Hawaiian, and they were. Kala’i was fresh off his falsetto win and they were confident and the notes were true. In the bar where I was born. And they dedicated *Hula o Makee* to me and I knew I was home. I wasn’t yet married to Effie, but she knew about my stories and it was nice to have proof, right off the plane, that I was from where I said I was from. This small-town encapsulation. This Kailua. Around the corner was No Name Bar where all the marines chose to brawl. Down Oneawa from Fast Eddies where Willie K played *Hi’ilawe* and *Hey, Joe*. But Jaron’s was ours.

## String theory

**APRIL 13, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: BUMPER STICKERS, RANTS**

Baseball, the Stoics, calculus, Euler’s formula, punk rock, quantum entanglement, aloha ‘āina, Siddhartha, the James Webb Telescope. I don’t know how they all fit together yet, but I know they do. They are all vibrating on the same invisible string.

## Both porn and punk

**MARCH 15, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS, REDUX**

“I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description, and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that.” – United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964.

In the same way that the exclamation point in the name Panic! at the Disco precludes any further disparagement of the band, the adjectives porn and punk free their correct usage from any further explication. As Justice Stewart (literally) observed, there often exists an archetypal shorthand for concepts that at first seem too subjective to define.

Hi! How can I help you?



The ethos themselves are anything but capricious. And they are uniquely valid descriptions of many things beyond the sub-genre of two aesthetics first described as hardcore in the 1970s, then proactively, and retroactively, applied to their influences and influence. Anyone that truly knows their meaning, however, will inherently know that Hank Williams is punk, with no further explanation, in a way that Blink-182 is not. Sonically, this doesn't seem to make sense. It just is.

For the same inexplicable reason, *The Evil Dead Part II* is both porn and punk. I didn't invent the rule. I just know it when I see it.

## Cats

**MARCH 15, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, HISTORY**

I watched movies all day on Christmas Eve 2019, three months before COVID closed Consolidated Kapolei, perhaps permanently. I don't remember what I watched. Maybe *Cats*. I do remember being woken up with the house lights on and the police telling me I had to leave. But after 8 hours in a theater chair, and 750 ml of vodka, I couldn't use my legs. Not for any kind of meaningful support. I had kicked over a large soda cop full of urine that I had been using to avoid stumbling through the lobby. It was in my best interest to comply, but I wasn't lying. I couldn't use my legs.

They ended up removing me on a gurney and I rode in an ambulance, sirens blaring to Queen's West. And that is where I spent Christmas detoxing through the new year.

It gets better. Sometimes worse. But better lasts a lot longer lately.

## The summer after COVID

**MARCH 15, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

I never told you this, but before I knew about your June and July, when you let me stay at your house while you were in Europe, I almost took everything that was mine. Had I known while I struggled with loyalty, you were struggling with loan and what position worked best for your needs, I might have done something differently. I might have chosen me over you.

Hi! How can I help you?

You can't have it both ways every time. If you choose this, know that you are choosing a life you do not recognize. And in two months when it's inevitably over, if it starts, well, you can regret using a nuclear bomb. But you can't take it back.

The biggest difference between men and women is what happens at this point. We break up and I swallow three bottles of wine and listen to Audioslave. She puts on yoga pants and goes to 7-11 and practically gets molested buying Doritos. If you're a woman, you have struggles. I'm not saying you don't struggle through this. Trust me, this particular one isn't yours. If someone calls at midnight, they want to fuck. Every time. I promise. Men calling and women calling at 11:56 is the difference between men and women. Yes, there are outliers. But nine times out of ten, she is not the one texting, "You up?"

## Drugs of choice

**MARCH 15, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS**

Every time before the feeling was exactly the same. The names were different, but the feeling was the same. That feeling in my chest and stomach. Evil butterflies swooping dark, not the kind that make giggles. This time everything else seems familiar. Except there are no butterflies. After Romania and the preschool incident, this almost seemed inevitable. Like I need alcohol to cope, she needed new male attention. And she will say "fuck it" to everything else. Your marriage, me, they don't matter. We all have a drug of choice.

## Baseball (part 19)

**MARCH 14, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

I love football, but there's always weird luck bounces, luck plays, Hail Mary's, immaculate receptions, et al. Baseball is a game of intent. You can't hit a 98-mph fastball by accident. Your life is literally at risk even looking at one from a batter's box. And the game isn't slow; it slows down. There is a difference. Walking around the mound. The batter adjusting his glove before every single pitch. One more conference with players who haven't touched the ball in hours. The relief pitcher faces one batter, strikes him out, and gets pulled because the next hitter is a lefty. Ten more premeditated pitches. Even when it's a tie game in the

Hi! How can I help you?

routine while their fans are developing bleeding ulcers. It's like grunge music. Fast slow fast. The game isn't boring. It's like your first girlfriend. It's beautiful and excruciating.

## Crape myrtle

**MARCH 11, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: RANTS**

## Catahoulas

**JANUARY 21, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: FICTION, RANTS, REDUX**

"Did you see those pretty, blue-eyed things?"

"The catahoulas? Yes."

"Some wild-ass, crazy bitches."

"Yes."

"Their eyes, they're like different colors."

"Yes."

"From Louisiana."

"So are you."

"Marilyn Manson eyes."

"I'm familiar with the breed."

"God, they're beautiful."

"Are you doing that on purpose?"

"What?"

"Nevermind."

## Franz Ferdinand

**JANUARY 3, 2023**

**CATEGORIES: HISTORY, RANTS, REDUX**

His name was Franz Ferdinand. Why would I know that? What's the purpose of knowing that? He shares his name with a cool band, but I knew it before that.

Hi! How can I help you?

I love the song Jacqueline (and erudite music fans will instantly know the connection here). I wish there was an actual her. Someone strong and smart and shaking off shrugs. There was a girl and she was close. I guess I was further from the idea of good.

Life is that way. It scares me. I look at people that are not much older than me and there is degeneration. Then I think about stupid questions, like “Am I happy?”

Is anyone happy? Does anyone get to be happy? I’m certainly not.

Hi! How can I help you?