

God Is an Anarchist

To: Mimi, Adam Lee, Leighton Lee

Part 1: Introduction

I set the timer.

You know what I would really like to see right now?

Streets full of dead cops and the bodies of unrepentant politicians hanging from lightposts while the crows rip open their greasy, horrified, exposed eyeballs. Frozen in that goddamn stupid politician glare writ large. One last election, and they all win. Nature votes them out of office.

Once the cleanup of the bodies is done, and the corpses are hauled away — and the blood hosed off the streets — we can start the new world. With just the sunshine and a new, fresh start. With only the peaceful people left. Not these retard fuckers who trample old ladies on horses, grab on girls like they did to fuckin' Krissy, and extort everyone for god knows what because they can't find a goddamn real job.

You can't share this stuff on social media, Mikey says. Because best case you'll be banned. Worst case they'll come to your door and haul you away. And if you try to fight that you could get killed. And if I'm gonna get killed it better be the right way. I don't wanna die like a dud.

I liked listening to his rants though. To outsiders I'm sure they sounded crazy, like extremist terrorist manifestos. But not to me. They made sense because Mikey was also the guy who saved cats from the road and nursed them back to health and would cry if one ever ran away or had its guts smashed out on the road.

I remember one night we were both drunk and I walked him home and he didn't want the two-man party to end, so he offered to walk me back home again. Then I walked him back home again and he actually offered to walk me back home again. This would have been the fourth walk home in the series. I was so tired and said no and I need to fuckin' sleep. A couple hot streaks of silent tears later, Mikey was visibly embarrassed at being unable to control the surge of emotion. I don't think even he knew how lonely he felt until that moment. I asked him if he needed a hug. He accepted which made me laugh so fucking hard inside. This is Mikey the anarchist cop killer.

But I think I'm going to fuck this up if I don't give it some kind of structure. I've never written anything like this and it's probably going to suck. But I want to tell it anyways. So maybe let's start with Asheville and just work from there. If you don't wanna waste anymore time and just wanna know what this book is about, the easiest I can explain it is that stuff is not as complicated as it seems. People just make it that way to appear smart and to hide from themselves.

Part 2: Asheville N.C.

Her ass was very round. And nice. And I imagined it tasted like mocha. I only had two dollars in my wallet, though, and could not pay for any services — and even if I would've had the money I wouldn't've because I had this fear about STDs. But all the same I did want to. The thoughts of viruses killing me brought me to some kind of sobriety even in that borderline blacked-out state, however, and won out.

I'd been stumbling around on a sidewalk after walking miles back to Adam's shitty flophouse of a place from a bar. They left me there because I was drunk and didn't want to leave.

There was a Jewish girl there who showed zero interest in me but for some reason the alcohol told me all things are possible. I was stuck to her the whole night and kept embarrassingly raving about the beauty of this "Jewess" to my curly-headed friend Aiden. I'd been reading Thomas Wolfe.

My dysfunctional then-sometimes-girlfriend was also there, watching the whole retarded scene unfold, and ended up slapping my face so hard I couldn't hear anymore. The folks drinking on the patio laughed super loud when they saw that. Smack. Another hot flash of that singular, crystal deafness. That pure, blaring tone. My friends left, and I eventually did too, without a car. Asheville was a new city to me. I had been romanticizing it though — as I said, reading Thomas Wolfe — and thinking about running away at the time. Glad I didn't. Bunch of hipsters who would most likely be intolerable now. Or as Mikey calls them, the cult of woke.

No address but a basic idea. After refusing a flask from another walker — a black man walking in slow strides down the street in massive JNCOs, appearing to hover towards me — falling down and slicing my hand bloody on a metal sign I grabbed for support, I finally got back to the city. Cars were honking their horns at me on the interstate. I probably shouldn't have been walking there and am lucky I didn't die. I also thought about my sister, then. She was not too far away at a college in East Tennessee. What if she saw me in this state? What if she was in one of these honking cars. I almost wanted that to happen, but

then again, that kind of collision of worlds would be too much right now.

Back in the downtown area in the inky black darkness of some warehouses I fell down again, and was talking to myself, but this time there was an echo. A...sexy...echo.

It was garbled and unintelligible. Someone was calling to me. I headed into the pitch darkness towards the sound unafraid and not caring too much if it was a trap and I died. She wanted to know what I needed and she dragged me across the street and I thought I was getting mugged. “Do you like the ass? Grab the ass.” That was our introduction as I recall. She pulled my hand behind her and slapped it on her partially exposed bottom. Mmmm. Yes. That was very impressive.

When my friends asked what I did later, they were unimpressed. “You didn’t fuck her!? Nothing!?” There was no way to explain this to these idiots. But I also don’t think they were actually surprised. What happened was that I had just walked her home. Mikey’s words had popped into my head too, about sex workers and all that. So much of it — so much of the time — these women wouldn’t have ended up being hookers if they hadn’t had a shit life. But Mikey does get too goddamn preachy sometimes, too.

I waxed eloquent to the woman, with her thick, dark hair to her shoulders, about why did you become a prostitute and isn’t there some other way, while Juanita — that was her name — ignored my bullshit and shouted across the street to a homeless guy — I assumed he was homeless — shuffling around in garbage by himself in the gas station parking lot caddy-corner, about how she needed her DVDs back.

I asked if she was safe. She pulled back her blouse to reveal a switchblade knife tucked into her dark purple bra strap. Damn, her breasts were nice, too. She could have fucked me up for sure. I kissed her on the cheek while worrying that maybe I could get AIDS from her sweat, turned left, and lumbered on down the road like a moron. Chafing now and horny, I made it to my friend's front porch. The ice-water-logged cushion on the wicker sofa was an evil mockery when I laid down on it, locked out of the house. I got there just before sunrise. I'd made it. I was a goddamn GPS. An accomplishment at least after all the fuck ups.

I'd meet Mikey at a college course held in the Smoky Mountains the same week. Part of the joint trip to Asheville with my friends, but they'd be dropping me off and heading back home to northwest Indiana. As for Juanita. I have no idea what happened to her. But she did have a nice ass. And I do hope she is okay.

Part 3: Smoky Mountain Biology

They say God has a plan for everyone and everyone's life is special and God protects people. But I remember someone was in a car crash at my old church and the preacher said it's a miracle they survived, and it's a miracle God protected them. But the people in the other car died. That fucker never talked about them.

GoD's WaYs ArE BeYoNd OuRs AnD iT WaS JuSt ThEiR TiMe.

But let me ask you, is it God's plan that the people in the other car died? Or that some little kids in Afghanistan have their limbs blown off by drone strikes? Or that some of those kids — even younger than kids — babies! — are trafficked and literally fucked by greasy old men and tortured and then die? Shut the fuck up with all this God's fucking plan faggot shit I swear you sound like a fucking retard moron!

Mikey had wound himself up, and I was trying to listen, but the redheaded girl fishing around in the stream had a halter top on, and that little bit of ever-so-slightly-chubby pale belly and navel exposed, with her nipples hard from the cold water, had my attention divided.

I know man. It's fucked up.

The girl's hair was long and pulled into two thick, copper-colored pigtails, shining in the sun. We were sent out to the stream to observe wildlife. I can't remember what exactly anymore — bugs or samples of algae or something — to look at under microscopes and then draw. Busy work. But we were taking a break by the waterfall now and my attention was on that bright white flesh and her big, beaming smile. That girl was afraid of moths. I remember because we had to go into this whole display room full of butterflies and moths pinned to styrofoam behind glass, and she started hyperventilating. She hugged the wall like a petrified shadow, and made a conscious effort to keep her eyes off the displays.

I wondered if something bad happened to her in the past that was associated with moths.

You've got these fucking idiots who say we can't trust our own logic because we need to trust God and not ourselves or other people, but it's always the preacher who tells you that. So why

should I trust him!? I mean how stupid do you have to be to believe that!

There was no reeling Mikey back in now.

What we were doing was this two-week college biology course held at a kind of nature center retreat in Smoky Mountain National Park. The deal at our school was you could either do a whole semester of this biology course on campus, or take two weeks hanging out in the woods looking at copperhead snakes, listening to bats with special headphones, and swimming in streams so clear it felt like paradise. Well, minus the crippling depression.

Plus the professor allowed beer and guitar playing around the nightly campfires, so for me and Mikey there really was no choice. Sit at a desk for months on end — or waterfalls, beer, and... well, nipples. The lectures were nearly impossible to stay awake in after all the fresh air. Not to mention the good, home-cooked meals served in the cafeteria.

I remember we stopped at a Burger King on the way back. I remember after that immaculate two-week soul cleanse of no internet, bracing raw oxygen and wholesome food, seeing an old lady working the fryer — caked-on makeup melting off her saggy jowls, bright red lipstick on her putty-gray, dejected face, tired eyes like soft marbles — I wanted to run back to that nature center and live there forever.

The girl who was driving, Amy — who had casually asked everyone right when we left if we'd tried anal sex before — couldn't figure out where we were at one point. This was before everyone had iPhones and all that shit so we were drifting around the border of Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio in a kind of

endless loop. We had been driving the same roads for almost two hours and had to go in circles over and over to get back to the exits we recognized. Everyone was getting tired and hungry and pissy. Except for the anal sex girl (she said it was “alright” when she and her boyfriend had tried it), who was pretty cheerful and emotionally balanced.

I finally lied and said I knew the way, and to go this direction and it worked. The truth is, I didn't know the way, but I did recognize that the four of us in the car were confusing each other, and the doubts were making it so that you couldn't even fuck up properly. Sometimes that's worse. At least if you fully fuck up, you can fully correct it. But put a "committee" in charge of solving something, and welcome to hell, my man. So through my bullshit confidence we finally got back on track.

Anyway, that trip is where I met Mikey. He had shaken a tree above me first thing in the morning on the first day, and drenched my still-shitty mind. I had about a two-week hangover (hangovers can exist outside of time constraints sometimes) from the Asheville thing, and the cut on my hand from the metal sign was still sore and just crusting over — my brain a bitter prune yelling at an even more dejected soul.

Plus I had spent all my money. I even sheepishly borrowed some from my sort-of girlfriend to buy a six-pack for the nature trip before they dropped me off. She was not too happy about that. I don't blame her.

I told Mike to fuck off, and he just laughed. I didn't know him and was genuinely pissed and confused about the cold morning shower from the tree. But something was kind of refreshingly shocking about it. There was no feigned politeness. He started to take an interest in me too, just because I listened to him, I think. It's not easy talking about killing cops, so he didn't have

many friends. Actually, I had never even seen him at the school before.

But what I saw was a kind of primitive awareness that I was drawn to like a magnet. He was kind of one with those copperhead snakes under that metal sheet at the nature center, and the babbling streams, and the massive trees. Raw and embarrassingly simple. He was a human.

Talking to him about asshole preachers and what not, I started to feel more free and uninhibited. At least, in this tiny part of my life. It seemed like I was supposed to meet him. Like the calmness of watching a setting sun after a tornado has ripped through your town every day of your life for the past twenty years, never letting you catch your fucking breath. And now, suddenly, it's otherworldly calm and you see this big orange ball blazing silently in the purple sky. Warm and bright and calm as hell. "You're doing okay. You're gonna be okay. I love you."

Part 4: Mikey's Letter

It was right there on the desk. No sign of Mikey. The house empty. Even though he had had his own place, he did frequent my shitty, cheese-wedge-shaped apartment (a tiny, drafty slice of a large house separated from the other renters) a lot, and would leave behind a dingy, rust-stained pillow with no pillowcase, a toothbrush, and maybe a half-consumed Copenhagen chew canister now and then — other such artifacts.

These were all gone. He was giving me one of his pep talks the night before about body positivity and sexual acceptance and stuff like that. I remember he was on a roll, and some of the

stuff he was saying was actually helping me to feel better.

But now all the signs he was ever here were removed, except the blackened husk of an abandoned Tombstone pizza in the oven and a note on the table, wet with spilled coffee. He must have kept thinking and writing — and drinking — long after I went to bed.

Before I passed out we had been talking about porn and this thing I had where I thought I had contracted every STD in the world.

I'd actually been tested multiple times for various stuff, but there is some stuff you can't test for. And that's the kind of shit that really fired my imagination in the worst possible way. And it wasn't that I thought I had a disease that was the worst. It was wondering how many people I was potentially infecting and killing just by sharing drinks, a kiss, or even just talking and accidentally spitting. How many girls would have cervical cancer because of me down the line because *maybe* I had HPV in my mouth from that nasty girl I made out with in Kentucky? So now when me and a new girl I liked kissed, it could go to her mouth, too. And then what if she gets a new boyfriend later and gives the dude a blowjob and he gets it on his fucking dick and then fucks her and then now she has it in her vagina all because of me? I told Mikey I had to let them know I might have it. Otherwise look at the catastrophic series of events that could be set in motion.

Mikey said I should see a psychologist about that. It wasn't normal. I was also still trying to go to church sometimes, but hated it in equal parts. But I told Mikey when you're raised like that it really gets into you. At one point Mikey cut me off:

I've rubbed my dick raw over the years man! There's nothing to be ashamed of!

Usually it was just 'cause I was bored or lonely. It's also just 'cause... biology, dude.

The moralizer cops and church-y morons will tell you stuff about your body and root nature being evil. It's all trash.

Now I will tell you this.

Some shit out there as we both fucking know is shit, and a bunch of fucking sleazy "Todd" fuck bros and old fucks preying on women. But also people that go headlong into porn and are jerking it 12 hours a day and stuff are pretty much always depressed and looking for human connection. They're starved.

I asked Mikey how he was not "starved."

Your problem man is that you think you're dirty and diseased and everything is evil so you end up blowing a gasket every time and ACTUALLY DO end up in bad situations.

People comfortable with their bodies and without a bunch of shame inside don't end up naked in hallways with girls they just met three hours ago, and hymen blood all over their jeans the next day, man. Sheezus. Not unless it's 100% intentional. For you it was 100% a desire to black out — to OBLIViate your feelings of unworthiness.

He was on a roll now.

You found acceptance when you finally thought the whole world thought you were dirty. She treated you — even though you were both wrecked — like you mattered and were a clean, normal person. And that's what you fucking wanted, man. And that's what you gave her, too. But you're doing it in a way that ain't good for you. You've gotta come out of it. Fuck religion and all that shit. You're not dirty, man.

I've been there. In that stupid fucking faggot brainwash. And got out.

Can you not say "faggot."

It just means they're all flaming fucked for all kinds of dumb shit. Relax. Not about gay people. The statistis are faggots too, for the state, but I'll call them "flaggots" if it makes you feel better.

I picked up the letter from the coffee puddle and read it:

Sometimes I wonder what the point is of existing.

Nobody will ever understand you.

Be assured of that.

But if the timing is right, they might be able to stand with you, sort of. And to vaguely sense what you were about, maybe. And appreciate it.

I think I'd like instead of a funeral for people I love to go through my room and look at all the books and trinkets and CDs and notes and pictures — my bottles of Scotch and stuff — I have in there. And the songs I've recorded and stuff. Then they can see maybe what I was about, in a way. But of course I'd want you to hide the piss bottles and stuff first and maybe give it a sweep.

I'm the simplest motherfucker that ever lived.

All I want is to be somewhere and nowhere at the same time. Does that make sense? To belong but also to never stop moving! And to never "belong"! I guess this is a flowery way to say "travel."

And to hit the G spot of the universe and let everyone know that everything is going to be okay.

That's a stupid line, but it really is like that.

When I think about that deer trapped in the courtyard of the school. Well, I think that's who we are.

But I also don't believe the hippie bullshit about when you die you just join a soup of dumb consciousness. I mean there's something to that consciousness thing, but it's way off. You'll always be an individual. That's the beauty of everything.

All rivers go from the mountains to the sea, of course.

But I can see: The only way to KNOW we are "one" is to be INDIVIDUATED!

You can't be anyone else.

That's the point of this whole goddamn experiment.

To learn how to best be ourselves. And you're beautiful man. Remember next time when you get down:

Divinity is being able to laugh about the animal side of ourselves, and thus become human.

And that serves everyone else, too.

Everyone is very beautiful if they can be themselves.

We can teach each other everything,

So let's start crying and laughing with them big belly laughs.

And STOP COPYING.

For love to be real...

If there is a god, god has to be an anarchist. There's no other way, if you really think about it. You can't force people to love and then call it "love," can you? And if god's an anarchist, god wouldn't give a fuck if you believed or not. I mean, if you knew everything about everything, are you going have a stick up your ass about some poor idiot being too pitifully dumb to get it? Nah.

So drop all that man.

Part 5: Good Morning, Okayama

I woke up in Asia, I'm not sure where. Was the timer still ticking?

In fact, I'm pretty sure it's what sent me on my way here. Regardless, Mike was gone and so was everything else — well, at least geographically. Of course, I really knew where I was, but what I'm trying to do is describe the feeling.

After college I decided that dropping roots in a Midwest nowhere town — where people were kind enough in a way, but

their insular outlook often led to a kind of blind cruelty that's hard to describe — was not for me. This, even though I had studied to be an elementary school teacher.

I say studied, but most of what I really learned was extra-curricular. At parties, befriending a couple rogue professors who I don't know how the fuck they kept their jobs, meeting Mikey, reading books other than my classes required from the library, and just basically following my own interests.

The dull hellscape of everyday college monotony at a commuter school in northwest Indiana wore on and on. At least there was MySpace. I used to write my fuckin' poems there.

By the time I saw what elementary school teachers and the schools were actually like, I said “fuck this,” in my heart. I knew I couldn't and wouldn't do it. So I found a way to go to Japan.

When I say I didn't know where I was at first, that was kind of true. I was jet-lagged and on some highway bus traveling from Kansai International Airport to Okayama. I kept waking up at random intervals and seeing green mountains rolling by outside the window. I felt like a sack of shit. I felt like I was in Tennessee. That was the only place in the states I had seen landscapes like this. Nothing like the perfectly flat grid of cornfields, sparse woods, and small towns of northern Indiana.

Outside the window, as the bus rumbled along the highway, I see a lady holding her tiny kid under the armpits and his pants are down and he is pissing on the side of a convenience store. Huh. Maybe the stuff I read in those tourist books about public urination is true.

At this point I was still very nervous and couldn't even fully enjoy the fact that I had finally made it. The reason was, I had had a meltdown before I left America, and fucked some shit up. Another meltdown that Mikey, for all his fucked up weirdness, was the only one who could counsel me through it. It was almost like I tried to sabotage myself before leaving — by starting a family.

It all followed this explosion in the street between me, my ex-girlfriend (the one who slapped me in Asheville), and her new roommate in Chicago. Neither of these women liked me very much, by this point. And in many senses, understandably so, I guess. I'd been invited by my curly-headed friend Aiden and his wife to head up to the city for a Casiotone show, and everyone was going to sleep over at a mutual friend's house on the north side.

Well, I got drunk enough so that after the show I tried to mend fences with the two girls, and it backfired. With one split-second flick of her acid tongue in response to my shittily-assembled olive branch of a comment, a flash fire vapor explosion commenced. All the pressurized pain that had for months been building and straining and relentlessly inflating against my barely-held-together insides, combusted. Before I knew it my eyes were hot with tears and I was on a street corner in front of the whole group, screaming myself hoarse until I could feel blood in my throat. I could feel the blood hot in the back of my raw throat as I high-pressure-projectile vomited the most life-disaffirming insults I could muster into their stupid fucking cunt faces, the most degrading string of misogynistic, crude expletives I could conjure from the pentagram-shaped portal to hell that had opened up in my chest.

The others looked on in half-drunken-amazement, seeming to in one instant understand perfectly clear: This guy has some fucking issues.

I got a behind-the-back-middle finger from the tall, acid-tongued roommate, and I still remember my ex-girlfriend's small body walking away, dejected, following her. I felt sad. The next morning I received a text message politely requesting I get "fucked in the face." Maybe I deserved that.

But that wasn't the self-sabotage proper. So I should quit wasting your time and get to that. I told you I do not know how to fucking write a book.

After all that bullshit that night, the remaining group of us went back to this girl's place. The girl (who everyone there called "Prairie") had been very motherly when I lost my shit and was trying to calm me down in the street and telling me about how right I was in the silent shadows of the trees after, as we lagged behind the group. God damn I was taken in by that. It felt so nice to be told you're not a weirdo. It's a weirdo's number one aphrodisiac, I guess.

Both of us being drunk, you can imagine what that led to. And I regret it, too, in a weird way (not the sex but the volatility of it all and the emotional strings being tied in and ripped out so fast) because maybe if I wouldn't have been such a fuck up, something could have worked there, and Prairie and me could have had fun, and had a nice, little relationship in that cozy little house on the north side of Chicago.

I don't regret where I am now at all, of course, but do you know what I mean? Life throws so many treasures on our shores in its generous and inexhaustible decadence, whether we

have time to grab them or not. Whether we can keep them and enjoy them or not. And then the tide comes in, sucking the shiny chances back down to the depths like they were never there. But they still stick with you. As sticky as the salt on your skin after a swim. It's hard to forget all those shimmering chances that wash up and back out again. But we all only have two hands. I'm not sure if that's good or bad. It's probably a good thing.

Prairie and I stayed in touch even after I came to Japan. Mostly out of necessity. I had overcome my fear of giving and receiving STDs that night temporarily, as she also had her own neurosis there, and so we somehow were able to absolve each other of all our hypochondriacal sins and worries-turned-paralyzing-paranoia. Uninhibited freedom fucking was the result. I was wasted. She was high. Looking back I should have also smoked weed, as perhaps I could have performed better sexually. Did I even "perform" at all? It's all a blur with a couple still frames. Anyway, there was no protection in site, or if there was, I had rejected it. It's hard to remember. But the possibility of a child was now there, and like Mikey said after I got home, head pounding:

Fuck dude. You may have to come back from Japan right when you get there now. Can't just bang her and leave her high and dry.... I mean you could. But then you wouldn't be able to live with yourself.

I knew he was right. I was also against the abortion thing. So there it was. My escape to Asia was now tentative. On standby. But meanwhile I had to keep preparing for it as if it were a sure thing.

The flashing lights of Okayama's Bic Camera and the blaring announcements in the nighttime streets gave me an existential, panicked giddiness. A gaggle of cheerful aliens shouting into my ears with megaphones, pushing flashlights into my sand-filled eyes that hadn't known sleep for three days. I couldn't understand a thing. Walls and walls of TVs and fuck-your-sleep fluorescence exploded from the open-front electronics store. But it was also exciting. Even in that state. Even for a small city. For me any city was big. And this one was in a brand new land far, far away from my previous life. I'd eventually get to the hotel. Get some sleep. Wake up and see the spread of colorful pickles and salmon and riceballs with seaweed. Miso soup.

Smiling girls at the front desk dressed impeccably in crisp uniforms and clean, attractive hats. Fresh morning sunlight in the lobby, bouncing off the smooth white porcelain floors, the taste of hot, black coffee. I remember saying "good morning" to an old man working in the konbini down the street. A gray-haired old man whose beaming smile caught me off guard, and who had actually understood my Japanese and responded in kind. Did you know you can buy a cheap dress shirt and tie at some of these convenience stores? Ain't that funny?

After a few days, another email arrived from Prairie. No baby. We messaged a few times after that, and then the whole thing kind of faded away. Back into the sea. I hope she is happy now.

Part 6: 'A Is A' in Asia

Okay then, Mikey. Without the government, who takes care of people who can't pay for healthcare?

He had flown into Narita two weeks ago, this was his last day in Japan. We'd stayed in Tokyo three days, and then taken the bullet train up to my small apartment in Niigata City, on the other side of the country, right next to the Sea of Japan.

Well, first, people ALREADY can't pay for that shit under YOUR current paradigm, you stupid fuck! He indulged himself an involuntary eruption of laughter here, then continued. And second, the Supreme Court ruled police have no legal obligation to protect you anyway.

He seemed kind of loopy right now. I never said I supported the current paradigm, either.

I picked up a rice cracker from the tatami floor and crunched into it. I was on a cushion and Mikey was sitting in the brown chair in the corner.

Seriously, though, look at that school shooting that just happened. No help from the pigs. The parents were even trying to save their own kids and the cops were fucking arresting and tasing the parents. Fuck these piece of shit cowards, man. Jesus Christ. Privatize this shit, then there would be some accountability at least.

So no cops. Private security firms, right? (We'd been over this a million times) I polished off another soy sauce flavored rice cracker and took a gulp of iced mug tea.

Yeah, why not? And your question about helping: If nobody is willing to help the person in need that's next to them — with food, or healthcare or bills or whatever — then why would a government made of the *exact same kind of unhelpful people* do it? And if they're not the same kind of people, what are they? Gods?

He had a point. I crunched on.

Most people are generally good when their needs are met, man.

Well, I never said people were bad. I don't think they are in general, actually. But people are usually stupid. Insufferably so. And so that often leads them to do evil things and become practically evil by default.

Mikey agreed with me there.

Mikey said if individuals can organize and make governments, why can't they make other, alternative systems of order.

People can't imagine doing things any other way.

Exactly. It's like telling a caveman about the internet. Or a slaver about other ways to pick cotton. Or that owning people is fucking wrong. You think you're not owned by the IRS? Test it out!

Well, that might be a little extreme.

How? If I wanna leave the states for good now and come here to stay in Japan as a citizen with you, and I don't want to pay American taxes anymore, you know I have to apply to revoke my U.S. citizenship, right? And they can literally force me to remain there by not approving me. When did I grant them this authority over my body? Well, people tell me democracy decided. Okay then. A bunch of other people I don't even fucking know decided for me. Apply that same thinking to any area of private life and people would call it out for what it is: insanity, violence, and sociopathic abuse.

Who's going to pay for your private services?

If you need something now, you're willing to pay for it.

Yeah, well.

Well, there you go.

Yeah, but some folks are freeloaders.

Yeah, and the biggest freeloaders are governments. Everyone last night was totally fine paying for karaoke, right? And if someone would have tried to pay much less than their share, or none at all, there would have been problems.

Well, yeah, maybe.

No, not maybe. Repeatedly not chipping in would result in no longer being invited out, eventually.

Maybe, unless that person threatens the others.

Now you're getting it.

Well, what about the poor person who can't pay for karaoke — or, I mean, private healthcare services?

We already covered this, dude. Fucking time and again. Nobody in their community will help them?

Maybe not.

Then so what if that community fails? They sound like scumbags, anyway.

He had a point.

But to answer your question more directly. Doctors want to stay in business, right?

It was too obvious to answer.

So imagine you're this doctor in a community and some poor guy can't get the life-saving operation he needs, that you can do. Even if you are a completely shit person, everyone in the town is going to know you refused the poor guy, and you've just made the worst fuck up of your life, and the best possible advertisement for your competition.

You'll be out of business in no time flat, and you won't be able to get what you need from others, either. Imagine it. There's no violent licensing racket protecting you anymore, and the other businesses in the community are free to refuse service to this bitch doctor based on whatever criteria they want. You want to buy groceries here? Sorry, we don't serve shitty doctors. Go somewhere else.

So unlike the police, or boards of education, or hospitals of today, You're gonna be accountable. In a quite elegant way. Do you get it? While all the while none of your rights are violated.

A is A.

I followed. But I was starting to get restless.

And all those buildings we saw from the Yurikamome line when I got here! How in the fuck is any of that even possible!? You know!?

I laughed. I knew exactly what he meant. I got goosebumps.

Humans did all that. Call it government. Call it private sector. It's mind-blowing. And yet you tell me nothing can work without a systematically-violence-based model of governance? It makes no sense. If we can do all that with a shitty model of governance, imagine what could be done if humanity was set free.

Michael was beaming now.

Let me tell you man, these fucking amazing arrangements and agreements don't all work because a state is overseeing them. They work because they serve the interests of the parties involved! For example, who, pray tell, is governing the very top of government? Those international governmental bodies and central banks and global think tanks and such. Who watches them? And if it's just a system of checks and balances and accountability, that means anyone can do it. And so can we. In a much better way.

He didn't wait for me to answer.

They prove anarchy works, because they still get all their agendas done even breaking all the laws they make for us peons. Backroom deals. Secret arrangements. Family heirs. Massive lobbying.

Self-interested people naturally contract to improve their positions, big or small. Always. They do this in dark and dishonest ways, but we can do it in good and healthy ways. Most people already live in life-affirming anarchy every day and don't even realize it, man.

What do you mean?

Your barber. That Japanese barber you told me about in Osaka. You said you got an old fashioned shave there with a straight razor, right? And that guy gave you a head massage and said your eyes were super tired and tense from stress.

Yeah. It was fucking awesome.

Well, why didn't he shove that fucking razor straight into your goddamn throat? Was it because he's afraid of what the cops would do to him?

I laughed.

It's just that he's not a psychopath and he doesn't want to hurt other people. And also, he wants to stay in business. But those are all kind of the same reason in a way.

Okay...

You completely trusted him, a total fucking stranger, with an insanely sharp tool right at your jugular. Do you suppose if the police and government had stopped existing right at that moment, he'd have suddenly plunged that thing into your neck, laughing maniacally and dancing around in your spurting blood? Would he have taken your wallet with its measly wad of whatever paltry yen in it that you had? Violence has a heavy cost, man. Most people avoid it if they can.

Most people don't want to be violent in the first place if they are basically happy and secure. And if people are intrinsically bad, what fucking sense does it make to give these same exact **INTRINSICALLY BAD PEOPLE** massive positions of power in a government anyway? See you can decentralize this shit and mitigate abuse by making the **INDIVIDUAL** the foundation of all rights. You own yourself. And violence is **NOT** the same as

SELF-DEFENSE —

He did have a point about the bad people thing. He was making lots of points. And to be honest I cared, but it was becoming overwhelming. Mikey was on another roll and was starting to do his over-explaining thing he did and it grated on my nerves and made my chest feel tight and my temples tense up. The clock on the wall was ticking loudly. As interested as I had been, I started looking for an out.

Oh yeah, that naturally occurring plant? Don't touch it! —

Mikey. It's your last day. Let's go for a beer somewhere. I can't handle the whole schematic of your worldview being force-fucked into my brain again right now in one sitting.

He looked embarrassed for a split-second. I hadn't meant to say it like that. There was the clear color of contempt in my voice. But I was hungry. Finally he hoisted himself up from the chair in exaggerated swings of his limbs, pointed his index finger to the ceiling as if to make a royal decree, and said:

The silly statist bitch needs a beer!

We headed out.

Part 7: A Pig Chooses Humanity

The ambulance doors were closing and I could see the young police officer talking to Mike through the shrinking gap between. They were standing across the parking lot, Mikey looking down at the oil-stained pavement as the officer spoke. We made eye contact just as the doors shut completely and I gave a guilty wave. He'd probably be in jail tonight because of me. Goddammit. The EMT was asking questions but I was —

apart from being really drunk — afraid, and couldn't focus to answer clearly. And I didn't wanna lie.

We were at an izakaya now, reminiscing about this night back in Indiana.

We had been at a bar by the tracks — I forget the name, but the one on the north end of town, not the Franklin House — and the room was steadily filling up with an uneasy mix of “region rat”-type people: cologne-drenched frat bros, classic rock contractors, and macho cowboy types putting on cringey, stoic airs. Of course there were others, too. And the women were generally fun and nothing to worry about, because they didn't want to start fights or any dumb shit like that.

The music had devolved from a quiet wash of Beatles tunes in the background, and upbeat alternative rock staples during happy hour, to the current cacophony of Maroon 5's "This Love" clashing with drunk girls shout-singing the same, Flo Rida, TI, "Trapt" — Oh god — other such stultifying assaults. Well, the TI song was alright I guess. Of course, all selected on the LCD jukebox by squawking girls in tight jeans, tucked into faux-fur boots in various shades of tan. Mikey was much more drunk than I was. We started at 3pm and he was at least three ahead of me now.

Without warning, and as I fixated on a bottle of Midori high up behind the bar, thinking about the Japanese word and the way it was lit up from underneath, Mikey snuck to the door and then bolted across the parking lot. I turned around just in time to see him catapulting his now tiny form over the chainlink fence in the distance, enclosing the darkness of the warehouse adjacent.

It was a nice jump. He had used one arm to kind of slingshot himself way up into the air, and then swung both legs over in a wide, elegant arc as if they were glued together, like a gymnast doing a routine on the pommel horse. It was impressive. Then he vanished into the darkness and of course I followed.

We ended up on top of that warehouse. Or factory. Or whatever the fuck it was.

Look up there. Let's climb it.

There was an old water tower on the roof.

I'm scared of heights but with the booze in me — and this technique of blurring my eyes and moving forward by feel more so than sight (I'd just read about this in a Carlos Castaneda novel) — we went rung-by-rickety-iron-rung, probably sixty feet, up to the very top. Halfway up, a car pulled around the corner of the building below us, braking abruptly.

We froze. It finally moved on after what seemed like minutes. There was a ledge at the top about two feet wide, with a guardrail we could push our stomachs against while we sat, legs dangling, surrounding the cone-capped reservoir. And from there, way out across sixty-some odd miles of interminable black space, the lights of the Sears Tower were blinking like tiny diamonds, blipping in and out of the crystal dark. Between were cornfields and factories and woods full of deer, and sleeping people in sleepy Midwest houses at night, across that perfect flatness.

The injury to my hand came later.

The rotten wood around the small panes of old, brittle glass gave easily. Laughing like idiots about this joke I made — something about the way I said "Biiiiible paaages" in a thin, raspy voice while we were talking about Mikey's Christian aunt in Kansas — got me feeling so manic and happy I punched out what remained of one of the already broken sections with my hand, still laughing, and reached in to open the latch.

We ran around inside the factory and Mikey sprayed me with a fire extinguisher he found in one of the rooms. Those fucking things will suffocate you if you breathe it in, just FYI.

Choking and coughing and shrieking, we ran the dark corridors and mostly empty rooms of these weird-ass buildings. It was like being in a video game. Then we got the hell out and went back home. I was pulling my now-grease-streaked Goodwill corduroy blazer over my head every time we went through the factory area which was well lit, where I thought there might be cameras. Mikey found this to be hilarious.

I wouldn't discover I was bleeding until we got back.

After seeing the bright red pool in his bathtub, Mike had wanted to drive me to the hospital right away. It surprised me, too. I was just trying to take a shower, looked down, and noticed my arm was sliced open and spilling blood everywhere.

Mike had been running around his house ass-naked screaming **WE'RE GOING TO THE FUCKING HOSPITAL NOW!** because the shower was full of my blood. He was in a state of total panic, and still covered in black grease from the factory — like an orphan from a Dickens novel or something. It was very hard to talk him down then, and convince him that if we got into any trouble with the cops like that, he'd go to jail just for

looking like such a fucking moron.

I finally got him to shower, tied a thick towel around my filleted hand and forearm, and off we went in Mikey's tiny red 1990 Ford Ranger. I wasn't in any pain, really. The power of the booze, I guess. He was driving way too fucking fast as he seemed to think I'd be dead in minutes, the engine revving wildly as he hit the top of each gear and slammed the stick into the next position. It was almost 4am when the red Ford Ranger whipped out in front of a patrol car, causing them to slam on their brakes and skid sideways. Mikey shouted about slow the fuck down you assholes, and then saw the cherries and berries immediately pop on — OOHFFFH FUCK.

So now we're pulled over in the same parking lot — the frat bros and fur boots bar where we had begun the night. Aside from us, a cop car with the lights silently splashing the asphalt in blue and red, and two cops, it's desolate. The dome light is on. Mike tells me to shut up and don't say anything, and tosses the keys at my feet.

Knuckles rap on the window.

I'm looking straight at the floorboard and Mikey's untied brown work boots on my feet, and the keys laying next to them, like a kid about to get scolded by his parents.

You almost hit us back there. What are you boys up to tonight?

Now, I'm not saying I believe in miracles, but what happened next comes damn close, I'd say.

Mikey began to weave this unbelievable story about how he had been helping me move all day long, getting ready to load

up a U-Haul truck the next day, and we'd been drinking and moving furniture and that sort of thing. You know, just “stuff guys do.” He told the cop that I sliced my hand open on the metal bed frame, and he knew he was really drunk and shouldn't drive, and was extremely plagued with guilt about doing so, but it was a matter of saving my life so he just had to do it.

Holy fuck. There's no way they're going to believe this bullshit.

After listening to Mike, the young-looking officer cocked his head to the side and muttered something into his radio, and his older partner was scribbling down notes in the background. An ambulance arrived and they loaded me in, Mikey still talking to the cop. At the hospital they stitched me up — nothing major, after all — and sent me home the next morning. As for Mike. That young cop just...took him home.

When Mikey told me the story the next day I couldn't believe it. He was sure to immediately note, however, that there are still no good cops. But in that moment, that young officer did the right thing.

Sometimes, a pig chooses humanity.

I laughed.

This was the second week Mikey had been staying with me in Japan. And as fun as it was, I did get tired of rehashing all these drunken war stories from the past. I think Mike did, too, in a way. I also have a hard time relaxing when guests are around so I was ready for him to go home. As I faded into sleep that night, comfortable in the cool breeze from the oscillating fan blowing on my skin, slowly running my hand back and forth over the ridges of the apartment's smooth tatami floor, the futon

soft and firm with the concrete below, I listened. Mikey's breathing in the other room was steady and calm like the sea. Like waves washing broadly in and out. The crosswalk on the street below chirped its cuckoo bird sounds into an empty shopping plaza, and it echoed off of the buildings opposite. The occasional group of cheerful, drunken merrymakers would pass, half-stumbling home from a drinking party in the city, not paying any mind to the people like me, laying silent and listening behind the wall of darkened windows above, opened to the unusually cool, summer night.

It's hard to say what it was, but nodding off I felt a great something gently, but unmistakably, break free in my chest, in a plate-tectonic shift, and crumble into the sea of all these sounds and feelings and people, and begin to dissolve.

Part 8: Laughing Mormon Jazz

I was almost gonna end the book on that last chapter.

I probably shouldn't indulge myself, but I had this dream on Mikey's last night, and to leave it out would be too fucking sad.

Anyway, I'll make it quick.

When I faded off to sleep that night, I guess it was Mikey's slow, steady breathing that created the whole atmosphere of this dream.

I was floating into a massive gray sky — somehow more endless than a clear, blue sky — and was out by the sea and the waves were coming in and out.

I floated over a massive sand dune that kind of reminded me of Mt. Baldy in Michigan City, and there was a tower to my right,

like something out of a Salvador Dali painting. And in the background a bunch of smokestacks. I was floating out to the sea between Sekiya Beach and Higashi Ward. Just southwest of Minato Tunnel. Niigata City.

I had ridden my bike out there alone when I first arrived, and the sites of the tetrapods neatly stacked on the shore, and the abandoned, washed out parks and beat up paths and moss-covered pedestrian underpasses really tripped me out in the best kind of way. I was still trying to shake my mental torment, too, and all the guilt at the time. And there was no more fucked up anarchist Mikey to help me.

Well, in this dream I fell down and started rolling through the sand, and a girl named Rebecca I knew from college was waiting for me at the bottom.

When I finally got to her I gave her a big hug. There was such a feeling of warmth coming from her in this dream that I just started crying. Her hair was stuck to my face in the tears and she just said: “Don’t be embarrassed.”

Well, she vanished, and then I was looking out across the sea, knowing it ended at Korea, Russia, China — but that just made it seem all the more infinite, in a way.

Once, when he had been preaching at me in Indiana, Mikey said that a drop of the ocean is in a way the same thing as the whole ocean, and in a way also infinitely smaller and that the moron fucks would never be able to understand this. At the time I had felt like a moron fuck but I finally think I get it now.

We're all kinda god — and there's no robbery in saying that — but at the same time to underestimate our idiocy would also be a mistake. Best you can do is follow logic and if you fuck up,

fix it, he had said. Otherwise all you can do is listen to other people and get derailed.

Anyway, after Rebecca was gone, the whole gray sky dissolved and exploded into this big brilliant blue, with a fat, warm sun glowing hot above our heads.

Mikey said he understood why people worshipped it.

I did, too.

The sun washed over the satsuki azaleas and pine needles and sand, and made this intoxicating aroma — it made me want to find the nearest respectable female and start a tribal beach family.

At the exact moment I was having this stupid fantasy about primal, mind-blowing sex with a dark-skinned tribal girl on the beach, two Mormons passed by.

They spotted me immediately in the dream the way monsters do right when you think about them. They still had on their goofy bicycle helmets and sweaty white shirts — with name tags calling the super young, awkward kids “elders” — and black ties, even in this hot weather.

I was sitting at a beach house in the dream with an icy-cold beer — there's nothing colder than a draft beer in Japan — in front of me. The guy who owned the place in the dream was named Hiroto, and he was playing some weird classic jazz version of the Blue Hearts' “Aozora” on an old radio.

I could tell the Mormons thought I'd be an easy target. A fellow Westerner, alone, looking insecure. I just wanted them to go away.

And *I was* an easy target, too. I always had been. Mikey told me that, too. He said I shoved down my skepticism and gut feelings too much for the sake of pleasing others.

It's not bad that you like other people so much. But it's bad that you let them take your time and fuck you over so easily. It's okay to hurt people's feelings sometimes. Sometimes, they need it.

I smiled at the Mormons, remembering his advice, and when they asked if they could talk to me about God, I said only if you have a beer with me. The boys gave nervous excuses as to why they couldn't — because of course they couldn't or they'd be kicked out of their whole travel, missionary thing — and moved along. I wanted to hug them, too.

Mikey appeared beside me giggling.

They can't even have one tiny beer with you to save your ENTIRE SOUL FROM THE ETERNAL FIRES OF HELL!

Ahahahahahahah! I guess you really are a piece of shit, bro!

Mikey burst into a huge fit of laughter here, shaking and convulsing with his arm around me. And I suddenly felt this wonderful recognition. A tidal wave of euphoria and pure understanding, as if the whole thing was like a big, beautiful, and hilarious game! And now I wanted to share the savagely ingenious, tender-loving punchline with everyone.

But as soon as I got it, it was gone, and I still couldn't grasp it. Not even in the dream. That "G spot of the universe."

Well, I knew there was love. Even if it's not a lot, or any at all, at times. But it does happen in life. Even saving a cat from the road is proof.

And if love is possible at all, like Mikey said, there's gotta be complete freedom — or else it would just be robotics. Complete freedom, even if that means the possibility of unspeakably horrible things. It's people doing this stuff to each other as far as I can tell, anyway, Mikey had said. Never saw god come down and launch a drone strike. Never saw god molest a kid. It's people that do that shit.

It's the politicians Mikey wants to string up. The unrepentant cops that get away with murder he wants to see lying in the street bloody, stiff, and rotting in the sun — no longer a threat. It's the priests playing god and destroying a child's innocence.

I do understand the objections. Why would god — if there is a “God” as such — let such evil things like kids getting cancer or getting raped, happen at all? I don't fuckin' know.

Any answer would be wrong. Any answer would just be stupid. I guess that's why the Zen monks say it's better not to talk sometimes.

I took off all my clothes and ran down to the sea, jumping in, and feeling amazing as the water washed over my naked body, dissolving all thinking into nothingness.

The fish swimming around the sunken tetrapods looked up from below, eyeing me skittishly. We observed each other for a weird instant, and then they darted away.