SUMMER FOREVER

Jacob Barta
Introduction

This zine is a linear story of me traveling to Portland for vacation, going to Palo Alto for a funeral, and coming home. It is stories from the days and the thoughts that crossed my mind during that time. It is all true, unless I remembered something wrong or rewrote the experience in my head. Everything is in chronological order but sometimes I skip days in between segments. And if you don’t understand what I mean, it’s probably because I was caught up in my own head.

I spent the first two months of my summer working 40 hours in a hundred degree kitchen during hundred degree weather cooking food for people in a higher economic class. I was tired and miserable, and drinking to counter that, which didn’t work. One day I remembered that people can simply quit their jobs, that it’s not a big deal, and I put in my two weeks. I felt a hell of a lot better and planned to ride trains to Portland to visit old friends.

I used to fancy myself a writer. Then I realized that everyone is a writer, but more importantly, not to try to find identity in what you do. I planned and worked on a zine last fall but abandoned it because it felt purposeless. Although I think this zine is also essentially purposeless, it was fun to start writing again. I wanted to make something entertaining to read and maybe make you think about things. I hope you like this.

Thank you to my mom and dad, and Command Central in Portland. Thank you to the authors I ripped off. Thank you to Lindsey for making the block print for the cover. Thank you to Benji, Lizzie, and Mae for helping in the construction of this zine. Rest in pieces Fuck Mountain House in Salt Lake. I wouldn't shed a tear if it burned to the ground. Fuck David Seidman and Property Management Services of Utah. You will never be more than middlemen. Big ups to kids, daydreamers, illegalists, thieves, bums, friends, parents, and good people in general.

For more copies of this zine please write to jaycer@riseup.net. This zine cost $0.16 plus time to make. Please pay (or not) accordingly.
Timeline

August 4\textsuperscript{th} – My grandpa dies on my dad's and my aunt's birthday
August 5\textsuperscript{th} – Caught out from Ogden, Utah
August 7\textsuperscript{th} – Caught out from Roseville, California
August 9\textsuperscript{th} – Caught out from Dunsmir, California
August 10\textsuperscript{th} – Arrived in Portland, Oregon
August 26\textsuperscript{th} – Flight from Portland to San Jose, California, Funeral
August 28\textsuperscript{th} – BART through San Francisco and Oakland, Flight to Salt Lake City
August 29\textsuperscript{th} – First day of school
This is the first I've written in months.
I'm on my way to Portland, Oregon for a vacation I didn't think I'd have. Some things you have to take.
I expected daytime in the desert to be hot, I know how it can get, but it's bad and it's still before noon. I'm presumably sitting on an Oakland-bound train on a shady suicide well opposite my exposed 600k series mini well. The train is stopped in a channel that runs beneath and through some part of Reno. I'm ready to be up in the mountains. Donner pass is the part of the ride I'm most excited about. For now, I'm stuck between 30 foot concrete walls topped with an additional 10 feet of chain link.
Being alone is the medicine I needed, or the fix to keep me going. It's been a rough year. I feel bad saying that because I have it miles easier than so many others, but things haven't turned out the way I had hoped. That said, I don't have a real vision or idea of how it should have all happened.
I've been lonely though surrounded by people, and alienated, but unwilling to open up and reach out. I know I've got to work on some social things, but time alone feels like a fitting cure. Counterintuitive in reason, but developing self-reliance and growing self-worth is just as important as building and maintaining friendships. I struggle with it.
It seems nearly impossible to want to live when you hate yourself. Cut it out.
Highballing on a suicide now with the smell of sugary spray paint on industrial district walls. I gotta move. Scary, dumb shit!

Hair

I have more hair than you.
I combed my hair today and came out of it with a bird's nest. Formidable. Worth living in.
I had a hard time sleeping with the wind blowing my hair all around. I thought of how when I was sleeping with Rosie her long hair never bothered me, never got in my face. I wonder what she
did with it.

As of the time this was written my hair is a little over two years old. It attracts a lot of attention. People stare, and sometimes they compliment me. I've told people I'm going to grow it out for five years then sell it to a wig maker or fetishist. We will see.

Roseville

Everyone's been nice here. Roseville, California. A man at an auto shop invited me over to refill my water and wash my hands. He had that gritty orange super remover shit.

I met Ned, Laura, and Nick outside the jungle. They're going to Nebraska to visit some parents. When I introduced myself to Nick he said “it's good to hear a real name. I though you were gonna say your name was 'shoebox' or something.”

Ned has stomach issues so I gave him some ginger candy, but he still puked three or four times. He was in good spirits about it and tried writing out his name while vomiting. They're all young and sweet. The boys are old friends from Milwaukee and Laura gave me a book of Sartre's short stories. I gave her Pippi Longstocking. They've been here a couple days.

I missed a junk train taking my sweet ass time waking up all slow and gente.

I used to be so patient and accepting of whatever came my way, easy or not, between Christmas and Spring. It changed after I was peer pressured into eating that tiny piece of weed granola bar. I was high as crap riding dragons, realizing I was more or less comfortable in my long distance, hetero-somewhat monogamous relationship. More or less comfortable but not enjoying myself anymore.

I thought about what Scott told me in Minneapolis last year about traveling with Kevin. I don't want to try to quote him but it was the same idea. You don't have to be open and accepting of everything and everyone. You don't have to be peaceful and calm. You don't have to try to be a buddhist. It's fine to recognize that sometimes shit's just fucked up, plain and simple. You don't have to put up with it, or at least pretend putting up with it is okay. Be discontent, it's fine. But it also doesn't necessarily make things easier to deal with.

Z-Train

That being said, I feel placid as shit. “In The Summertime” by Mungo Jerry mixed with Queen's “Don't Stop Me Now”, extremely at ease with a distant sense of forever. Maybe that's how transcending time and space is – not dominated by excitement, rather a theme of comfort and belonging. Like nothing matters and that's a good thing. That's how I felt on my first train – like I knew what I was doing.

I want to say that maybe certain things are meant for certain people. That is hard to suggest without at least peripherally involving god, so maybe I don't know what I believe.

Caught the Z-train out of Roseville in the early afternoon. It stopped with the units looming over the jungle in direct sight of me. I ran behind a hill towards the end. From a distance I thought I had a lot of ride options but the containers were all the wrong size. The 48s were full with 53s and the mini wells were suicides. Past those was a series of piggybacks and the second one had mudflap-style plastic hanging down from the bottom of the truck trailer. It provided almost total coverage. I later learned this is called a skirt. I thought it was too good to be true, because of that decided it was sketchy, and continued on down the train. A couple cars farther there was another pig with a skirt, and being sensible this time, climbed on.

I was hoping my train would take left at the split, really hoping because otherwise I’d be headed back to Reno. A junk train was departing in the same direction at the same time, which meant I had to be on the North track unless the conductors were deliberately trying to make the trains crash, which I unreasonably imagined was a reasonable possibility.

The pig with a skirt was a sweet, entirely shaded ride, but the scenery was dead and disappointing until Redding, California. From there the route crosses over Lake Shasta on trestles a half dozen times. Maybe 20 miles out of Dunsmuir a 30s-ish couple
were waiting for the train to pass to cross the street. I was leaning off the side and the guy reached out to high-five me, just like shooting the tube in Tanner Park. I reached too but we missed. He yelled “argh!” and made me smile wide.

**Beer**

In Dunsmuir I bought the most expensive beer of my life, a seven dollar Rogue Dead Guy Ale. It was sort of a mistake, and sort of the only beer I wanted to drink. Fuck it. That's an hour of work right? Like Bukowski said, “with that attitude, how can you buy anything?”

**Shit My Spacesuit**

I get a little sick I think every time I start traveling. I chalk it up to changes in diet and lack of sleep. I slightly shit my pants at the bus stop. Fart gone wrong. A miniscule amount of shit, but the entire turd's amount of embarrassment.
Self-shame is the strongest shame.

**Black Butte**

My activity for the day was to go to the Black Butte Center for Railroad Culture. Fucking great, look them up. That's all I'll say right here.

Their tiny pond had a scummy, muddy bottom and even though it's shallow little lightning flash images of monsters pulling me under shot through my head. I'd never been scared to swim in the ocean except for the other day when I was daydreaming about it. I remember twelve years ago swimming in a motel pool I convinced myself there was a giant squid in the deep end and had to get out.
In the evening I floated out on the Black Butte pond in their plastic rowboat, the “Ram-X Crawdad”, with half an oar. Shannon cut out overgrown willow boughs with a chainsaw and I shuttled them to shore.

**Wet Brained**

Sometimes I feel like I am significantly dumber than I should be.

My short term memory has been going the last two years. I've also had multi-month drinking binge streaks both past summers.

When it started getting hot I found out I could get as drunk as I want without the worry of a catastrophic hangover because I would sweat it out so soon after waking up. I finally started regulating the week before I left. I barely had any symptoms, just off and on mild anxiety. That's normal for me. I remembered that waking up is unpleasant even when sober. I've drank a few nights since then, starting when I heard about my Grandpa's stroke. It hasn't been enjoyable. It wasn't fun half the time I was on a roll anyway.

So why keep drinking? I'm not sure. It's fun sometimes. It helps me settle down and release. I trick myself into thinking there's nothing to do at night.

I'm concerned because I have a family history of alcoholism, and also it's just in my nature to worry.

I realized yesterday what it is. I'm trying to fill a void. Since I started getting depressed when I was 16 I've had a sense of there being something more. Like I was missing the point. Like life is a joke on you, on all of us.
I just want more.
Drinking is fine, but it doesn't answer my questions.
You can't fill a void with a void, but most of us try.
Mossbrae Falls

Summer forever is first and foremost about fun. All day e’ry day. It is also about new places, long lost friends, good people, wearing the same clothes every day, living on the edge, trains, skateboards, graffiti, wizards, bad kids, punk rock anarchy and of course doing crime and breaking hearts. Pretty much whatever you want it to be. But second most of all summer forever is about swimming. Or that’s my favorite thing to do this time of year.

Everyone has been complaining that it’s too hot. Utah is hot as balls, and Roseville was especially hot as balls. Dunsmir is normal; tolerably hot. I haven’t sweat since I got here and got to break one today hiking to Mossbrae Falls. The authorized and I think only trail is a mile up the mainline track! The water comes right out of the rock and the falls are gorgeous. As is the case with virtually every place I go to get wet, the water was cooler than being cool (ice cold). I jumped in twice before I had to lie in the sun and stop shivering.

The thunder of the falls raining down seemed to be growing and when it was clear the rumble wasn’t my imagination I ran back to the tracks. A train was stopped on the mainline. I had time to draw on three cars before it started moving, then grabbed a ladder and rode it while I finished one more. Tagging trains in your underwear next to a waterfall. Unbelievable. Summer for fucking ever.

Train hopping is a Team Sport

The L.A. To Portland Z-train ran a little late but I caught out on a 700k series mini well before dark. I didn’t know what a mini well was until Lindsey looked them up and rode them earlier this year. An hour later the sun was set and we passed milepost 344. I was hoping someone would be there to see me at Black Butte. Sure enough a man and a woman were looking out over the fence. I waved and they responded the same way with enthusiasm. The lady hollered “YEEAAAH!” louder than the train, louder than my earplugs. I was swallowed whole by a euphoric wave, and blushing, I lit up inside.

Portland

I arrived bright and early and skated a few miles to Chelsea, Ben, Adam, Laura, Jordan, and Michelle’s house in the Northeast. Command Central. I’ve been in Portland two days now. Done some things. Took forever trying to find the bluffs park. Being the stumbling leader, we were always headed in the right direction but we were lost and I was paranoid of failing in my awkward and tiny position of authority. We made it though.

Adam saw some people there that had met before and Ben, Adam and I fit into the hatchback of their car to be whisked away to the southeast. We stopped on Interstate Boulevard for beer and picked up Corina and Willie G, both strangers. Minutes earlier in the car I told Adam about the two best opening lines of stories I knew.

1. So I was waiting in line to masturbate the the Starbucks bathroom and...” And

2. So I was smoking crack on a roller coaster and...”. Willie G shattered perceptions. Destroyed all. New brain needed.

“So I just got out of jail for selling molly, right, and I was blackout drunk driving on the freeway and my car got hit by a semi truck and my friend had to go to the hospital but nothing happened, right? And right before at the party we had just left I took the virginity of my best friend’s sister. And that’s not even the worst part.”

Ben and I couldn’t contain ourselves and were laughing til it hurt in the back-back of the car. People seemed flabbergasted and didn’t say anything, but I was loving it and had to ask “well what was the worst part?”

And he replied “that my best friend walked in on us as we were doing it. She didn’t seem to mind though, she thought it was gangster.”

We arrived way the fuck west at a performance art show in a nice but very plain apartment. Adam was making the rounds talking to everyone and having fun and being awesome, and as much as I thought every girl there was pretty and every boy was probably rad, I just got anxious and drank fast, and Ben and I kept running out to smoke cigarettes. I didn’t even want them, I just didn’t know what to do.
I got pretty drunk. I ran back up to see what Adam was doing and to try to get him to leave, and he asked me if I wanted any 'sassafras'. Sepdan, the driver of the car that brought us here, had a bunch of sassafras, a drug I had never heard of. We were told it was pure MDA, pretty much the same thing as MDMA but without the "meth" prefix. Adam told me to go up and ask Sepdan, so I Waltzed right up and interrupted his conversation. "Sepdan, can I have some sassafras?"

He looked up and yelled across the room, "Willie G., hook this kid up!"

I walked over to Willie G. and he had a bag of white powder. I didn't know what to do, and he didn't know how to give it to me, so I found a bottle cap and he poured some in there. I walked away so I didn't have to hang out with either of them, and rolled the shit into a cigarette. I wanted to smoke it but I thought I should make sure that smoking it wouldn't kill me, so I asked Sepdan. He gave me a patronizing laugh, unrolled my cigarette, and told me to suck on the tobacco. Swish it around until you can't stand the taste. Later I asked Adam how he took it. He said Sepdan licked his own finger, stuck it in the bag, and Adam sucked it off. He said he didn't find it strange until I mentioned it. I didn't notice any change in feeling and I really don't know what sassafras is or what it's supposed to be, if anything.

Like I mentioned earlier we were way the hell out west of the part of town Adam and Ben lived in. We thought it was fine because Sepdan promised us a ride back. The problem was that Sepdan had been taking a lot of sassafras, which seemed to affect him even though it didn't affect me, as was high as a kite, getting touchy-feely and acting rave-y in general. Ben and I decided he was too fucked up to drive and decided not to leave with him. We hung out and kept drinking, drank until the beer was gone, and hung around until the residents asked us to leave.

I knew we were far but had no idea where we were. I hadn't been to that part of town and was too drunk to figure out cardinal directions. Ben and Adam had it under control though, and we talked and talked, smoked, bought more beer, walked for three and a half hours, and made it home before the sunrise.

The Sex Lives of Wizards

Drinking regularly now. Maybe it is better I try not to describe these days. Things will be things.

I woke up with a headache and the impending doom of one of my classic hangovers. It took all day and three beers to reconcile. I felt like staying home and watching a movie, but when a friend invites you to do something, you should do it. Promote an active lifestyle and live with a sense of adventure, open to possibilities.

Sarah and I trekked across the river to her friend Madeline's house, and a fire. We went there the next day too, dumped food and made caprese sandwiches. Madeline is a seamstress with a machine gun of an industrial sewing machine. The motor is so big it's external, tucked beneath the desk rather than built into the rest. And her house is comfortable in all the best ways - cozy, off kilter, somewhat messy and dirty, slightly falling apart. This might not make sense but the house gave me the same feeling as when older people are genuinely interested in hearing the real stories my friends and I have. Their energy and attitude, nonjudgemental, just surprised to hear about things they never knew existed in great, specific detail. The look in their eyes. A house!

Everything is Dying / Tamhauser

A sliver of despair returned to me like a needle in my arm. I don't know what to do here. I wish I had a tour guide and a baby sitter, for this vacation and for life in general. This town is soulless and dead already.

After thinking that I realized that bullshit is delusion, an internal projection on a massive external body.

People, kids in nearly every place I've been, say there is nothing to do in their town. But drink. But smoke pot. And so on. We all get bored and apathetic at times but we can't wait around. It's not up to life to present itself to us. Adventures happen but usually you have to go out on one to get one started. Run around. Be wild. Climb trees. See new things. Talk to strangers. Do something you
shouldn't. Build shit. We can create momentum.

Let's bring this city to life, to light, tonight. So where do we go from here?

Tripping Balls on Drugs

At the bluffs we decided to trip on acid. Back at home I took two hits and swam out into the fuck ocean. Acid wasn't like how I thought it would be, and also the feeling was altered because I was drunk and later hungover while high. We were all generally the same people doing generally the same things we normally do. That makes sense, I just thought it would be different somehow. I didn't hallucinate. I was just confused and couldn't remember what I was thinking and trying to accomplish. Nothing was horrible or wonderful. A direct notebook quote: "acid was fine". At one moment of feeling especially normal I started talking to Laura, and she was so hard to follow I said "you're making me trip the balls I forgot I was tripping".

I felt a little bored around the time the sun was coming up. I avoided people and listened to stoner metal on the porch. I pulled two sheets of cardboard out of the recycling bin, found a tarp, and slept like a tramp on the side of the house.

My grand realization of my first acid trip, summer eleven, written in my notebook was "note to self: in addition to whatever, don't try to debate/convince anyone of anything, and don't try to explain anything to anyone."

August

August and Gudj have a squat with themed rooms. The living room is wilderness and August's bedroom is nautical. They don't seem to be trying very hard. A tree branch hung up with two small nature posters. A net, fake palm tree, and a shrine of canned fish.

August turned me on to a free skool self defense class. Laura and I tromped there today. I used to hate her, Alison too because they were new. For a period I treated unfamiliar people with aggressive hostility. Unfounded, unreasonable xenophobia. I'm glad to know and love both of them and thankful they put up or saw through me.

We boxed in a cement art loft, August hitting with pounds more force and dedication than I anticipated. Before I thought I could spar him. Ha! None of the classmates had any sense of humor or levity but were more than helpful and intent.

Klonopin

Ben has a lady friend named Alex visiting, and most people with drugs seem lack any understanding of security culture. The origin story I never asked for but also forgot involved a Hawaiian woman passed out in her doorway with all the lights on. Alex cleaned out her cabinets.

The day she got here she cut up lines on a little mirror and I railed something I didn't know. I bought some klonopin later on. I've been brain dead since the acid, or since this year's personal drinking tournament binge, but also now. A zombie lacking thought, also ignorant of the realm of craving or caring. I'm enjoying it without guilt, but worried about fulfilling obligations.

Steel Bridge

I've wanted to use freight trains as city commuter transportation but either the lines are inconvenient or I don't have a purposeful destination. It could work here. Laura, Alex and I walked to Steel Bridge on a reconnaissance mission - really a late night stroll with a six pack. We sang songs.

Alex regained her week-lost appetite after getting drunk and wastedly tried to pull together a whole stove meal for beer munchies. She really didn't know what she was doing and I had to take over. I elected myself babysitter and fire department.
Rebel

I skated over to 46th and Hawthorne after morning rush hour. Ben is an amazing artist, driven as well, and smothered with self-deprecation and doubt. He tattooed a flamingo on me!

After I got revenge for the Dunsmuir seven dollar beer by stealing a 23rd Anniversary Special Edition $13 Black Butte Porter. New Seasons really is the friendliest store on earth.

Ben and I met up with Ava, another student from Ben's tattoo school to drink beer in Colonel Sumners Park, get pizza, drink more in the park, and get more pizza. Drunk and deciding to live on the edge, I skated madly on pitch black streets and woke up with a pebble embedded in my left hand.

Half-Apathetic Doom

At this point Adam and Ben are dead broke. I'm a three-thousandaire, and operate with a mentality of being constantly poor, unable and unwilling to spend money and buy anything. A miser.

Sole and the Skyrider Band toured into town. Tonight's unit of activity. I convinced the boys to busk - rap for tickets. I made a pledge drive thermometer, periodically updating our monetary progress. Alex kept running across the street and talking to people, possibly selling drugs, but together we got most of it and rocked out at a shwanktastic, spotlessly clean basement bar.

At the merch booth after the show I asked Sole if he was involved with any activist groups, and he said he wasn't. This is too hard to transcribe without grossly misquoting both of us, but we both think we are facturaled. It's a species, people are doomed. His words were bleak with a poison-tinged enmity. I have some similar opinions. Like Daniel Quinn said, we cannot reform ourselves out of this. The world will not be changed by people with new programs, but by people with new visions. It's more likely global industrial culture will devour itself than the world getting somehow quote unquote saved. This won't sustain.

I don't put stock in the value of hope. Shit's facturaled. We hate life because it sucks. But failure and tragedy should not be glorified, romanticized, or admired. We have every reason to try to make things better. It's heartbreaking to know I can never do enough, but if you can help one person without harming another you've done something. Even minimally. If you save, preserve, or improve a place or situation without collateral damage or detriment, you've succeeded. That's the idealism. That's the goal.

We need to recognize, celebrate, and remember our victories, no matter what size. Win small. Win any size. Try. Put in work. Take care.

Advice

Today was beautiful. I wrote pages spracked on coffee that felt like the most meaningful I've made.

I skated all day with Ben, building sea legs but shredding the nar as well. Being a kid again, before boredom, drugs, and trying to get facturaled. Hours later I got irrationally facturaled.

Ben, Alison, and I bought a six pack and a brass monkey and drank on the esplanade. Leaving, for more beer and home, I chased down two train/crust fashion visual archetypal kids and asked if they just got off a ride. Shit went personal. Soul avry. My 2 a.m. advice flew over the inebriated Seattle-bound greenhorns. A thought so often repeating in my head: "I'm trying to help", but futilely falling flat. The kids knew shit or less about what they were doing and weren't willing to camp overnight to hit up the library in the morning for a map. My impossibly vague and disoriented directions were enough for them.

Thinking now, I don't want to give advice to people, especially about trains. At times I was graciously given extraordinary train help and want to reciprocate, but when I advise the situations are always, in a way, tainted. Geography, schedules, routes, things change, and often I just don't know. Fucking figure it out. That's what it comes down to. I've done it myself. Shit will turn out.

Rule: train advice only to friends and sober people. Beware of unsolicited advice. Don't look desperate. Don't be desperate ever, if possible.
Same Idea, Next Day

Giving unsolicited advice to the train kids made me sick and I puked after I wrote that bullshit when I got home. Earlier yesterday I had a conversation about guilt with Adam. I worry for the people I tell about trains. I developed a complex after too many questions this year. I worry about them getting hurt or dying. I’d feel crippling guilty if they did even though it might not be my fault. Adam said that guilt doesn’t fix any problems. It doesn’t solve anything, and feeling guilty essentially is just feeling bad for being a person.

I feel guilty for my privileges as a rich, white heterosexual male.

In a political context, be aware of yourself and circumstances. Check your privileges. Act accordingly. We can reduce our fucked up-edness. And we shouldn’t feel bad for living, being a human being. Did you decide to be born?

The Oubliette

“Oubliette” is a French word for dungeon, derived from the verb “oublier”, to forget. In the Bastille prisoners were cast there to be ignored, often left to die. Oubliette is also etymologically linked to the word oblivion.

Despite being a writer wanting to reach an audience, I’ve always been prejudiced against open mics. In the spirit of giving things a shot, I went with Ben, Adam, and Michael to the Oubliette, a meta-romantic black and red candlelit speakeasy. I read three notebook entries and my friends rocked that shit. Even literally all the strangers killed it. The night came together like good sex.

Babes

There are legions of beautiful looking people in Portland constantly crossing my path, often in skirts on bikes. I keep thinking I want to make out with someone, and I feel with a confident approach and clear, direct question kissing could happen. “I was wondering if you would want to make out with me.” That’s a proposition, not a question, but imagine the spirit.

Thinking about it today, I’m not sure I want to make out. Or I’m not sure why I want to make out other than biology. Interactions and relationships don’t need to culminate in romance. I also decided not to pursue a crush until I’ve been hit on or wrangled at least once. It’s a patriarchy issue I’m hypersensitive about, but also an ego thing. I wouldn’t reject the flattery.

Skateboarding is Ruining My Life

Do I need to repeat the title again? It’s not actually the case. Skating down Broadway Bridge during rush hour after snorting half an orange muscle relaxer was scary awesome. I’m psycho compelled to get out of the house and the roommates at Command Central are either doing their thing or lazing, so I skate miles. And skating miles is ravaging my thigh tattoo. The bird’s eye is a goopy hole. I fear it’s infuckted.

I’m disappointed too that I haven’t regained my sense of balance, which I refer to as sea legs. But magically, my skateboard is alive and well after four separate instances of losing control and shooting it into traffic. It even bounced off a front wheel right back too my clumsy feet.

These Kids are Alright

You know you’re doing fine when the methed-out teenager you’re waiting with at the bus stop is bragging about how many times he can go to jail in a week. God knows why they let him out. If he knew what he was doing his ass would still be behind bars. Pat yourself on the back if that guy wasn’t you. You’re probably alright.
Choose Your Own Adventure Shows

There were three options of free shows last night, and by running the usual slug pace I missed the riot girl one. But almost all of the roommates of central mobbed deep to a backyard party. There was talk of massive homemade instruments being performed.

I told everyone to leave without me so I could talk on the phone to Lizzie back home, an hour later started walking, and on that walk drank most of my backpack of beer. The backyard seemed like it should have had fireflies. There was that same humid Asheville summer magic from two years ago. It was black as dark coffee. Like a fool I got sick off of drinking and drugs and had to go home.

Ava gave me a ride home on the pegs of her bike, complaining all the way about how much farther she had to go. I felt romantic.

Dog Balls

Jonathon came over to the house with his two dogs, the boxer wearing the Elizabethan collar of neuterdom. He said “Michelle, I’ve got something for you,” pulled a red pill bottle out of his pocket, and underhand tossed it across the living room. She caught it, then screamed and squirmed, and ran to the bathroom. Multiple rounds of vomiting echoed off of the tub. The red bottle contained a single dog testicle floating in formaldehyde.

Hazy Daze

The last days have been a blur for a lot of reasons. I'm 'drinking drinking' again, been taking anti-anxiety meds, running and running, and for the lack of a better word, felt weird about writing. I'm not sure what to say or not say, silly because it's not that big of a deal.

Turn Down

Uncle Al, Alison, drove me around town all morning on her scooter, a 1973 Honda Trail 90, moving faster than I've moved in days.

I've been trying to be generally nicer to people, everyone, for happiness' sake. But today the wind was a bit sour and made me unsettled. I was mean to a homebum after Alison gave him change and I regret that deeply.

The scooter rolling, the wind in my face, the city, the day. Less sun today. Trying to talk to Uncle Al on the scooter made me think about social communication — when to talk or keep my mouth shut, how much to say, word choice, a bunch of things. I am already hypersensitive to what I say and how I say it, and I didn't today make progress. It's silly though, ironic or whatever the right word is, that this contemplation and self-analysis came from yelling at the back of Alison's head on a scooter.

Mega Earthquake

Aaron posted on facebook “i just felt the earthquake in logan [Utah] !!!! there is a giant split between the island and cliffside and I think a house fell in!!! i hope my moms house is okay up there, im going looting. Peace.”

A little background — growing up in Northern Utah, often times living within walking distance of the fault line, teachers talked about a giant earthquake that was supposed to happen. From what I was told the mega earthquake happens every 300 years, and the current one is overdue. No one remembers the earthquake 300 years ago because the mormons didn't live here, but also I've never heard there were native accounts of it. Maybe it never happened, but it was always talked about as some sort of legitimate doomsday looming over us.

Naturally I freaked out and tried calling almost everyone I know in Salt Lake or Logan to see if they were okay. I called Lindsey, Lizzie, Gaia, Alanna, Skyler, Boing, and my mom and dad, and no one picked up their phones. At first I became really
self-pitying ("why the fuck won't anyone ever pick up my calls?") before realizing that maybe they were dead or cell phone towers were down. There weren't any reports on the news, and I assumed that was because it was too soon or everything was destroyed.

By the way, moments before the hullabaloo, Brian and I snorted two tiny lines of Subutex, a heroin replacement treatment drug, and I was higher than I have ever been in my life off anything.

Eventually Chelsea got through to someone and we found out our loved ones were safe, and that Salt Lake did not fall into the pit of hell that it deserves to exist in. We continued on with our day and our plans to go to the beach. I hadn't seen any ocean in over a year. I was pumped.

The problem with feeling physically better than I could imagine was that Brian and I couldn't control our stomachs. I vomited at the gas station before even trying to get out of town, but even the vomiting felt good. The stomach acid didn't burn, and I just drank more water, filled the old gut bag back up, and blasted it out again. We had to keep stopping on the way to get more barf bags. I cycled from euphoria to puking and not minding it, to nodding off in the middle of talking.

I did have a worry that felt realistic that my heart might stop. I didn't want to fall asleep because I didn't know if I would wake up. But I don't know how close I really was to overdose, I have no frame of reference for that, but everything turned out fine.

It was briefly sunny at the beach and we walked out south almost a mile away from the parking lot, the families with kids, to a log from where we couldn't see anyone else. To my surprise, the cold water didn't instantly give me hypothermia like it usually does. The suboxtron, as I started calling it, was like a magic waterproof blanket of happiness, dreams, crystals, and rainbows. Brian, on the other hand, was neon white and shivering like a motherfucker. Chelsea brought a big inflatable raft and we paddled out and tried to ride the waves back in. After an hour I got out of the ocean to relax, and Brian and I struggled to split a beer while we played hot dice.

It was pitch black halfway back to the car and we cruised through the forest while I could barely keep my eyes closed. We stopped in Tillamook, a town with literally no one on the street, to eat bar food. We were also the only customers in the bar. I ordered deep-fried mushrooms that were like fatty, salty balls of molten lava, and made $2.50 off of $1 on a computer gambling machine. Back in the car I nodded and nodded like I couldn't say no, and after forever we were back at Command Central. Adam was still up and I tried to explain my suboxtron day to him, starting to come down off a consistent 16 hour high.

Last Thursday

This is days later, doing the same old hipster party lifestyle thing. I think I'm really going for it much harder than my peers with the booze and cigarettes, but no one is pressing me to do so. The hangover and sense of impending doom are becoming routine now, but still incredibly difficult to deal with. Sometimes I feel like I'm not pulling in enough air. Today was 'Last Thursday', your average street festival art mall type deal. After the grocery store and wasting away the day, I met August and a couple of his friends to walk up to Alberta Street and trash score burritos. They had a bottle of Canadian whiskey and each sip tempted my reflex to vomit.

The trash was full of food and some people even offered up their leftovers freely. August and I both felt disgusting but kept putting them down. August had to go home, probably won't see him for another year, and I met up with Adam and Laura, who were busking as a living statue and a clown, got a 40, and got a ride home. The 40 didn't do shit for me and I was still anxiety ridden, staying up too late before my early morning departure. I'm sad to go to make it simple. I haven't seen these friends for more than a couple days at a time since I was a teenager. It hurts to get to learn about their lives now and a great time. I've been considering being like everyone else my age, moving away from their hometown because they're too lazy to make things cool themselves, and flocking to Portland to plug into an already established scene. The only difference is I believe I have a legitimate reason. Or is it still an excuse?
Airport Gangster Rap

I never beep when I walk barefoot through airport security, motherfucker. Fuck this shit. X-rays death gaze. Captive audience advertising. Systema anti-anxiety mouth breather technique like owning the weirding way and Paul Atreides. My name is a killing word. I'm the Muad'Dib of Nothing. Taking bad shits 'cause of my bad diet. No one knows what's going through my headphones, music seditious enough to get me arrested. Then thousand feds tapping my phone like that ash of a cigarette. There ain't no more smoking lounges anymore. I grew up too late. Don't judge or talk to me. Please. I'd prefer to sit on the floor.

It's just too strange that I made these miles alone as a freight train stowaway and now I'm flying out of here on my parents' money. Dirty, bloody Jacksons sewn together like a goddamn magic carpet.

Animal Hands

An interviewer once mentioned “being cerebral” in a question to Jean-Michel Basquiat. Shortly thereafter The phrase is revealed to mean that you are caught up in your own thoughts.

I think I forgot to mention where I am or what I am doing. I am on a Southwest 737 airplane, flying over a mountain range I wish I could identify, from Portland, Oregon to San Jose, California. I am headed to Palo Alto, California to attend the funeral of my maternal grandfather, John Morris Parker, Morfar, 1920-2011. 91 years old. My head aches and I have to piss but I am delaying. I'm having trouble focusing trying to read Sirens of Titan. I am behind on keeping up on my writing. The man next to me, in the middle of the three seats ordered hot tea. Nonspecific. I ordered orange juice without ice. I watched him clumsily pour sweet 'n low into the hot water and noticed cracked, nubbly, yellow sideways fingernails. Then he picked up his cup with both hands and I realized that all the tips of his fingers except the left thumb were shorter - had been chopped off. I felt like vomiting. I paid attention to my breathing.

Life is fine but I wish I was dead rather than here, stuck, even if it is only an hour. I'm the wrong size for this shit.

Morfar

Before we ate our acid a week or so ago, we all wrote down our favorite memory. I didn't know which mine was and went for the story of waving at Black Butte.

When I was 17 living in Boulder, Colorado, I got in trouble three times - first for alcohol poisoning, then for making a misplaced joke about bringing a gun to school too loud, and last for shoplifting. After that I got a therapist and a bipolar disorder diagnosis. And Lamictal(C) and lithium. The therapist was sweet and well-meaning but I never seriously trusted him. I didn't know why my parents were paying a stranger to act like my friend. I hated and doubted much more back then, and if you want to believe it I was even more stubborn. Once my therapist told me to close my eyes and think of a fond memory, not necessarily the best but a good one. I began to silently cry. I didn't know what to think of.

Even before Morfar died I worried about having to speak at the funeral. I don't know what I would say. I have a solid memory and bank but I've come to see that on command, when I really need to remember something, my recollection is awful. I can't bring to mind much about my grandpa.

John Parker had some amount of Norwegian heritage. My sister and I always called him Morfar, meaning mother's father. My grandmother, his wife Jan, was Mormor, mother's mother. Morfar was an aircraft engineer and pilot. One story I remember him telling me: as a young buck flying a small craft he wanted to fly below sea level. He charted a course out over Death Valley, the lowest point in America (-282 ft.) and took off. His descent toward the valley floor was too rapid and sharp, becoming a nosedive, but he leveled out just enough to softly bounce the landing gear wheels on the ground and go back up in the sky with the birds and the clouds.

He had been developing dementia the last few years. One of Morfar's neighbors bought the bat cycle from the "Dark Night"
Batman movie, and he told that story over and over. The last time I talked to him I wished him happy birthday, and he replied by wishing happy birthday to me in return. I missed the last time he called me, and when I called back he didn't pick up. The day he had a stroke I spent all day weeding and cutting down our neighbor's overgrown plants because the city threatened my house with a ridiculous $2,500 dollar fine. And he died in the hospital later that week, at 2:14 am, the exact time to the minute that his wife died.

3912 Grove Avenue

My cousin Mackenzie picked me up from the airport and drove to Morfar's house, which was full of relatives I rarely, some whose last contact was a decade ago. A decade ago! That's half my life! In contrast to the large number of people, eight, the house was almost empty of things. A consignment store or donators or someone already relieved 3912 Grove Avenue of its furniture. I felt out of place around my whole family. I'm losing the desire and perceived ability to describe things.

The Funeral

I put on my dress clothes my dad brought for me, including my favorite pearl snap shirt, and we filled the rental car.

The funeral was a celebration on the top floor of a mexican restaurant with about 30 people, most old and all white. I learned a lot of those people knew me as a much younger person, a knee-high happy child. I didn't want to meet them or anyone new. I couldn't hobnob and bullshit like the rest of my family could. Apparently I didn't inherit that. I kept thinking "get your fucking hand off my back"

but no one touched me. I didn't want to talk. I guess I lack grace. I wanted to run away like usual. I fully embraced wanting to be the fucking baby that I am.

I drank three margaritas to try to settle. It kind of helped. I get uncomfortable drinking in front of my parents and rarely do, but the only other margarita I've had was with them. They took us out to dinner over her christmas break. Thinking of Rosie only made me feel lonelier. Another failure at anything.

People spoke, my sister made a slideshow. I didn't think I'd be so affected, almost crying on multiple occasions. I wish I cried regularly. It seems healthy. Unfortunately, I was socialized a man.

I drank more and ate. Without getting anywhere close to the subject the man across from me told me the story of finding my grandpa stuck in bed post-stroke in great detail, all with a smile on his face like the punch line was coming up. I went out to write this in the parking lot, guilty about exploiting the emotions of the moment.

Wheels, the handicapped juggalo at Alchemy Coffee once recited "some of us die". I wish I was gone all the time. Now, I see it's too much. I'm never gonna ever gonna die. No.

Inventory: Six Things

While cleaning out the house Mackenzie found a card that Morfar had written on. He read it at the funeral.

"Inventory"
That I have learned during 1939 [age 19]: My biggest year to date.

1. Dancing and occasional dates.
2. That girls can be good fellows.
3. How to work hard.
4. That initiative and ability is the product of discipline – of drive.
5. That I must not bite off more than I can chew.
6. That there is usually 50% disparity between plans and practice – but this can be narrowed down by energetic execution."
family walked down the beach and my sister and I volunteered to put the box in the ocean.

Just before, my dad told me “throw it like a frizbee”. I thought it was some weird attempt at a joke. We rolled up our pant legs and waded out. I soon realized the water wasn't getting much deeper and as I kept walking out the waves were coming in bigger and bigger. After the last swell soaked my entire bottom half, with a feeling of Dada irreverence, I did indeed throw the mortal remains of my grandfather, John Morris Parker, like a frizbee into the bosom of the Pacific Ocean.

Going Home

Today was the garage sale at 3912 Grove Avenue. Getting rid of everything. Despite customer haggling on top of outrageously sad low prices, making the scene more or less embarrassing or pathetic, the sale pulled in close to $700. Tante Lou (my Aunt Wendy) gave my sister and me her share of the profits. Sweet of her and nice to make a little money after a month of unemployment.

My dad and I bought a new replacement toilet from the hardware store. It was broken before we pulled it out of the box, assembled and installed it regardless, and not surprisingly, it leaked. We went back and exchanged it for a new one and repeated the process, this time with great success.

By afternoon we said goodbye to the house and my aunts and my mom, and my dad drove himself, my sister, and me to the San Francisco Airport. We three had a flight booked taking us back to Salt Lake, home again. I wanted so badly to be home ever since Palo Alto, less than three days ago. The last leg of a trip is always the stiffest, and most crippled, making time slow, or stand still, or fall over. I don’t know if home will be better but onward, onward. I’ve got shit left to do.

I’m starting college again tomorrow after dropping out three years earlier. Two online classes. School taught by robots. As much as dad insists the professors are real, alive, there will be no concrete verification of that supposed fact. Also I miss some of my
friends. There's always a greener side of the dice.

At the airport I got funneled through the body scanner. We live in the fucking future, where homeland security wants to see your balls. My bag got singled out by the x-ray conveyor belt and the search began.

My mom had packed my carry-on, a flimsy grey duffel bag holding large pictures framed in glass. Thinking that bag was meant to be checked, my dad unknowingly put several tools into the bag. After whispering daggers at my sister for talking about bombs in the security line minutes before, I was horrified to witness TSA agents pulling hammers, wrenches, drill bits, and a draw knife out of my carry-on. By the way a draw knife is a blade (this one about eight inches) with handles on each end, loudly suggesting decapitation. I was dumbfounded. My dad came over after his suitcase was also searched, talked to TSA, and amazingly managed to get us out with only a few tools confiscated.

The flight was scheduled for departure 6:35 p.m. West Coast time. We hit the gate at 6:20, and with the 737 still parked and waiting we were denied the chance to board. Too late. Everyone was already on. Nothing we can do. Last flight to Salt Lake for the day. Better luck next time.

My sister burst into tears.

In a breathtaking and immediate turn of events our tickets were smoothly transferred, my dad got a hammer and the draw knife back from the evil clutches of the cursed TSA, and we were on BART to Oakland to catch a direct connection to Salt Lake International Airport.

The glimpse of San Francisco and Oakland were nice. Cold fog covered the cities. It was refreshing to see graffiti again.

Suddenly time was dwindling again and we got off at the Oakland Coliseum / Airport BART stop just as a Raiders game ended. Thousands of fans, brutes in the path. And the bus shuttle was almost too big for traffic with the streets overrun. At the second airport my dad removed and checked the tools but my bag got searched again. Avoided the body scanner though. It worked out. I'm writing this from 30,000 feet.

So this is the end. What are the lessons? So where do we go from here?

In Summation

I think things have a natural way of finding a balance, whether in the short run or long term. You can't have the good without the bad, or at least they go very well together. I don't believe in or understand karma but I used to fear having too good of a time. I wasn't used to it and I would doom myself to feeling worse. Now I'd say expect everything to happen. Or just don't even worry about it. There are no rules.

I remembered that people die, even people close to you. And it hurts, and in ways we are not prepared for. I don't know what to do about that. It seems like a lifetime of funerals. As far as the whole balance thing, I guess babies are born but at this point they don't make up for it. I guess they're not supposed to make up for it exactly. Maybe I'm too young to understand. Anyway I can't fathom being a father, but big ups to good parents, and good people in general.

I decided summer is the best time of year, but fall is my favorite time of year. However that's not a segue into another writing project.

I can't figure out what I think about traveling and living at home. I want to run away and wander but at the same time being in place, solid and comfortable, has its benefits and opportunities. I just want more. I think it's some punk identity bullshit. Let me point out that it is very realistic to do both. Or do whatever you do. Whatever you want. Everything. All day every day. Fuck yeah. Never disown your idealism.

And lastly I realized that going home means spinning a circle. Always in circles. Circles upon circles upon circles.
The End