

An offering is an acknowledgement of the entity that you are offering to. It is, so to say, I acknowledge that you exist, and I shall keep this in mind as I undertake my actions for which I give this offering. Here is a character list:

Syd (male or female? a turtle? someone's younger sibling)

The Reader (you)

Cat (a human)

Brick (a cat)

Me (the writer)

You're Always So Late

THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL

"Meaningful quote."

-Person, from the introduction to *Book*, quoted by Different Person in Magazine : The 2012 Film Issue

PART I

1

She walked around the obstruction fiddling with some pink object as she held her umbrella in the crook of her arm and whispered hello as he backed into the overhang of the doorway. School must be letting out, he thought, as he walked down the stairs, reached his long arm around the door and pulled out the broom. He swept the floor. She rounded the corner and walked up the hill past the window and then past the other window. She looked up at the mountains and continued on, down the path, through to the street.

"It's been a while, yes? When did you leave?"

"March. May."

2

Sybil opened the brown package. It was a record. A music record. A blue music record. She ripped it from its wrapping. She put it on the turntable and watched it spin. She did not yet like the staccato rhythm. It was an acquired taste.

3

"What are you doing here?"

Broomstick looked around, briefly caught Cat's eye, and darted out through the brush and up over the fence.

4

Death. It happens to the best of us. The rain is falling from the sky. The rain starts up in the sky. And then it falls down. And we eat the rain that falls from the sky. And we turn a beautiful shade of green. We turn a beautiful shade of green when, in the daytime, the sun shines down from the sky. We eat the sunshine, too.

5

The writer sat in the dark, polishing his spectacles with the belly of his shirt. It was half-past the midnight hour and he was waiting on a response to a previous missive. His son, Marchie, was sleeping in the next room. Everyone was sleeping, it seemed, but not the writer.

PART II

6

[the flight to the other side]

Chapter Two

Try not to fart in the room that is not yours.

Chapter Three-dimensional

"It's me and my machine for the rest of the morning. For the rest of the afternoon. For the rest of my life."¹

He wanted to turn off the music, but these words caught his attention. The words were attached to the music that was coming out of the spinning disc.

"The problem, then, which the Gehry house tries to think is the relationship between that abstract knowledge and conviction or belief about the superstate and the existential daily life of people in their traditional rooms and tract houses. There must be a relationship between those two realms or dimensions of reality, or else we are altogether within science fiction without realizing it. But the nature of that relationship eludes the mind. The building then tries to think through this spatial problem in spatial terms. What would be the mark or sign, the index, of a successful resolution for this cognitive but also spatial problem? It could be detected, one would think, in the quality of the new intermediary space itself—the new living space produced by the interaction of the other poles. If that space is meaningful, if you can live in it, if it is somehow comfortable but in a new way, one that opens up historically new and original ways of living—and generates, so to speak, a new Utopian spatial language, a new kind of sentence, a new kind of syntax, radically new words beyond our own grammar—then, one would think, the dilemma, the aporia, has been resolved, if only on the level of space itself. I will not decide that, nor dare to evaluate the outcome. What does seem certain to me is the more modest proposition that Frank Gehry's house is to be considered the attempt to think a material thought."²

1 Millworker (James Taylor) from *Evangeline* by Emmylou Harris

2 Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism by Frederic Jameson, p.128-129

Chapter 4:30

"What time is it?" asked Cat to herself in her mind for the umpteenth occurrence in a seemingly short but unknowable quantity of time. Perhaps she should find out about winding that pocket clock that she scavenged from her dead grandma's apartment. It might have been her still alive grandpa's watch, but what use had he for a timekeeper in the place where he was now?

"Should I ask someone the time?" she thought. "No," she thought, "it is not that important." A Chicago lyric ran through her mind. She looked at it, started to smile, and then chased it out of her consciousness. The man at the counter ordered a cheese sandwich (with mushrooms).

The sky outside smelled of waterbuffalo and the hold on waitamminute, let's slow down a second. Is this the direction we are going? Let us have a look around.

The short order chef burnt her bacon as the grease splattered onto her apron as she hummed the tune to the song from the end of the radio talk show about Life in her antiquated small-time burg. The fly flew onto the frame of the painting that hung on the wall and then flew off, buzzed around, and landed on the table, and then flew off and landed on the wall. The daylight shone through the large window onto the table as Cat picked up the large book that she had previously been attempting, unsuccessfully, to read. It was titled, *The Random House*.

She flipped open the book and noticed an old weathered torn spotted yellow folded sheet of paper. "What is this?" Cat thought. *pen milk eggs. bread. vegetables ketchup. for salads. juice. fruit gas. popsicles.* She flipped over the paper. Math numbers stared back at her. It looked like long division. She folded the paper and returned it to the book. She read a random line from the random page (*a horse's burden of rider and pack*) and snapped back into the

reality of her surroundings. She looked out onto the street and sighed a sigh of relief as she saw the thing she was waiting to see.

Five

"It smacks of effort," said Mateo. He was clearly a Daoist in his outlook, in the superficial sense. Certainly no Daoist I knew behaved like my previous conception of the ism that was based on my brief exposure to the concept in my freshman year Religions of Asia class. "This is getting tiresome," I said to myself. "I think it is time to end this relationship," I said to the world. Why? Because I have high standards and I know you can live up to them.

PART III

Look How Far We've Come

Sometimes anniversaries are good for thinking about where you were at the beginning.

Sybil walked outside with her grandfather and saw the wild world of rainbows and mountains. No, she didn't do that. Not exactly. Sybil was plopping rocks into the great pond that lapped at the shores of her old house. She looked up at her older brother as he pointed to the water.

"Ripples," he said.

Sybil sat in the room as she listened to the birds talking outside in the wild, wild world.

Sybil poured herself another cup of carrot top tea. It was urine-colored and tasted of carrots.

"It's raining," he smiled. Sybil had walked out of the open door and looked out at the sky. Her neighbors were directing traffic. They were on the road to find out. They were standing in the courtyard, the three of them. "I like it," said Pramoda, as she bounced up and down. Sybil had walked back inside. She listened to the periodic exclamations of the child whose voice she could not identify. She listened to the mellow advice on dreams that came through the speakers. Tears welled up in her eyes.

"Too complex," said the writer. "We need to simplify, get down to the essence of the thing we are trying to communicate."

Marchie looked at the books strewn across his father's table. *K, Have You Seen...?, The Painting That Ate Paris.*

"What is it?"

The Plot

This is a story about [metaphor] and [things that happened].

Broomstick crept up to the library and did a nervous little dance before deciding to enter. The librarian got up from the desk and walked towards him, staring him down, and shooing him out of the room. They spoke in thoughts.

"What is it? You want to play?"

The librarian had some sort of allergy that was somehow related to cats, but he was friendly enough in his all too serious sort of way. They walked back and forth aimlessly through the corridors. Broomstick walked down the stairs, past the shoes, and stood by the open door, contemplating. The librarian took in the scene of the narrow hallway, the doorway that framed the outside, and the exit sign above, as Broomstick stood on the precipice. The cat turned and walked back up the stairs and the librarian returned to the library, to do the things that librarians do.

The writer walked back into the writing room and sat down at the desk. No, first, the writer looked down into the crevice between the bed and the piano and spotted the seeing eyeglasses that he had been unhurriedly searching for over the past few days. Next, the writer sat down at the writing desk. There is something about writing, the writer thought, or, more like, proposed. The writer waited for an answer over a cup of mind altering tea.

Mustache variety pack time looking up," he said. Say no peel and stick.

"You can't save everything," he said, "even if you wanted to." Sometimes you just have to let things flow, he added in his head, but did not speak out loud because he thought it'd sound a bit hokey. The thing about all of this information was that it was completely raw. Without the metadata, it was completely useless for any *specific* purpose. It was like the story of the search for the picture of the *I Ching* (the one for the book cover). Wasn't it easier (and more illuminating) to simply perform the rituals anew? And then there was the issue of storage vessels.

A hunger built up inside his...um, these words, um...chronicles of robot head...well, the thing is, I suppose, the book is for me, so, your interest is not my concern. But I want you to like it.

Five

"But I don't want to read it," she said.

Cat looked out into the deep focus of the kitchen. "Follow the woman," she thought (in French).

"Anyway, I have to go to work. I'll see you later tonight."

Cat sat. She yawned. An attractive memory began to emerge in her head and she tried to draw it out. It was a memory of a dream. What had she been dreaming of last night? And why did she get such pleasure out of returning there in her mind?

PART IV

16 seems like a lucky number to me

There are things that you are not doing that you could be doing. No matter. This is not a test. And you are not being judged.

He stared at the keyboard. He stared at the letters. Perspective shifted as his eyes glazed over and his mouth hung slightly open. He thought of small creatures climbing large mountains. He thought of black voids that separated islands. He thought, How could anything you communicate not be a reflection of the medium in which you are communicating? There was a snapping and a jerking and he looked around and scratched his head.

This is a story (always) about trying to live in a world we want to live in, because why would we want to write any other story? This is not a negotiation. This is a conversation. "But I don't understand," thought the writer. "Why all the struggle?" Thoughts of Camus, the possibility of a wider story that he could not quite see, but no, still. There was still no good reason (sadism?) for prolonging the outcome. "That's just the way things are" popped up and he scowled at it until it disintegrated. "It's just sloppy writing." He thought, "Why cannot someone else do it?" He thought, "No, it is like all of this has been a foundation and when will the structure emerge?" He thought, "Maybe it could be like planting a seed and now everything will come to fruition." He remembered...and then he forgot. He went back to bed to get the book that he now had to finish within the day, due to its being requested. He had some more notes to make in the margins.

All of a sudden, he heard a thump. A thumping, actually, it was

continuous. Thump. Thump. Pause. Thump. Pause. Thump. Thump. He walked outside and saw the bird trying to go in an impossible direction. Angelika had a concerned look on her face.

"Perhaps I will look for a ladder," he said, as he closed the door to the library.

The outside doors, now open wide, did not attract the bird's attention. He climbed the ladder and grabbed the bird, unsuccessfully. He shifted the now-detached tail feathers into his other hand, and, once more, took hold of the bird. He climbed down the ladder and walked out the doors and the bird shot off into the sky in a very specific direction. He shivered. He bent down to release the feathers as Broomstick rubbed against the back of his legs.

"We are forgetful."

"And by that you mean...?"

Cat waited for a response from the philosophy minor with whom she had met for coffee. He gathered his thoughts.

"There is no sense to be made from the film, because there is no sense to be made from our lives. I do not mean that there is no meaning to be made, only that the logic, the continuity, does not hold. We are a logic *problem*. Only, we are forgetful."

Cat stared into her cup at the dark liquid and watched its slow swirling eddies.

"Of course, it is all always contextual. Everything always appears to work at a certain perspective sometimes. Don't you think?"

Cat half-smiled as the regular-aged man conditioned his arguments.

"Yawn."

I am very tired.

"What is the point? Isn't it time we gave up?"

"Yawn," he said. "I am very tired," he said.

Sybil put the slotted bowl under the faucet and ran the water over the greens. She couldn't quite predict where things were going next, but, all and all, it did not appear to hold her interest.

"I liked the beginning, but then it got all crazy."

"It's like a mixture of crap and more crap."

The writer was confused. Which chapter was he working on? Was this still the same book? He heard a drip, as the leftover raindrops slid their way down the house. He had made a mistake somewhere. A thinking mistake. This was now an exercise in futility. He was building his muscles.

A reminder. All fun and games until we remember. So, have we reached the apex of understanding and fallen asleep? Again? Empty words. Empty words. On a Friday night. (today is Friday)

"Yawn," yawned the person wearing the gray shirt. There was a heaviness in the back of his head, down through his shoulders over his chest and into his stomach (the place where he stored all his knowledge, as per the customs of the place where he dwelt). He put his pointy finger into the crook of his ear and moved it around, digging. He was certainly digging.

Cat drove up in her armored vehicle. She slammed the door. She approached the house. The music slowed. Tick tick tick. Rat-a-tat tat. She opened the door (to the house).

Sybil awoke from her dream. It was too late. Her bystanding days were over.

"It boggles the mind, it does. You can quote me on that."

He twisted his mustache. He scratched his head.

"So, I have this ache in my back. Can you folks do anything for that?"

The deadline was approaching. Tomorrow was a big day. *Things* were happening. It was no ordinary day (tomorrow).

"It is almost as if we were having a one-sided conversation."

There was almost a logical inconsistency to the grammar. Cat squinted at her reality. As if she could catch it coming apart at the seams. She spotted a few flakes of her scalp that had fallen on the table and snapped back into her interpersonal relations. She felt a drip in her nose and her hand reached up and she consciously wiped the back of it (her hand) against her left nostril. She snorted to herself and others and sighed.

"Have you ever read *The Castle*?"

The piano music started slowly. It went around in circles and dropped down low. Then it came back up, went around in some more circles, but now there were multiple levels. There was a stairway and then the floor dropped out. The writer scratched his knuckles. It was getting late, again. He rubbed his temples, hoping for some inspiration.

Broomstick sat, waiting for the door to open. Broomstick ran through the door (after it opened). The door closed. Broomstick sat by the door, waiting for someone to come through. The door opened and he darted back outside. He walked out into the street and looked up at the rubbish bins. He rubbed his body against the brush. He walked back towards the now-closed door. He sat, waiting for the door to open.

Sybil opened the door.

"We are going to need a new catalog." The librarian paused.
"You know, for the next act."

ACT V

Black Jack

There is a difference between the way things were before and the way they are now. Yet, I cannot help but feel that the more things change, and so on. On the bus, the previous day, the same bus, but different, the ride prematurely curtailed, there was a conversation with a man that I do not know.

"You've been an excellent sport," he said.

"Thank you," I said, as I proceeded to embark on the long buttonhook shaped route of my journey.

There is a difference, yet there is a similarity to previous feelings that I can relate to in my mind. Ah yes, now I recall. We were talking about jazz music, my favorite of all musical genres. But I digress. I digress, again.

"More production!" came the shout from down the hallway of my mind.

"For who, for what?" came a response, echoing the words of the running back from my younger days.

If there is no plot, why would anyone want to exist in this story? Unless there was something to existence itself. Well, is there? I asked rhetorically to myself. I was self-narrating again. My armpits smelled like, well, armpits, I suppose. I took off my shirt and all of the voyeurs gazing at the screen of my life greedily took in the contours of my body. But this was a book that you are reading, so I am much more clearly the creation of your imagination. But the book is simply attempting to describe a different level of reality, and what manner of technology propels that world? Does it only work if you stop paying attention to its mechanisms? Could you see the mechanisms if you even tried?

The umbrellas lay on the lauhala mat, in an open position, superstitions having been discarded the day previous. The newer one (but not the newest) had recently become detached from its strings

during a day of heavy winds and rains. It could be sewn, but carefully. Perhaps three attachments to two of the arms of the metallic skeleton. The old umbrella was probably an easier fix, the same fix as before, the same fix as the time before that. But in the meantime, the umbrellas sat, on the lauhala mat towards the back of the room in front of the large brown chair and the short table. I walked to the door. I opened the door. She walked around the obstruction fiddling with some pink object as she held her umbrella under the crook of her arm and whispered hello as I backed into the overhang of the doorway. School must be letting out.

The Spy and the Way

I walked out past the mountains, down the path, and through to the street. I bumped into my neighbors. They asked me about my trip. We exchanged pleasantries. We discussed nothing of substance. I continued on my way.

The garden had grown in its own way. I pulled out some stems and left others alone. But mostly I walked around and said my hellos, admiring the beauty of a garden left to tend for itself.

"You burnt it."

As it dried, it turned darker and darker, the corners already blackened.

"You ruined it."

The children stood around the pan, as the baker tried to stifle his feelings of regret.

"Hi," I nodded to one of the children. I walked past, towards the office.

"Well, did you find what you were looking for?"

"Yes. After a fashion."

On my way home, I looked to the sky. Bits of slightly burnt chocolate stuck in my teeth. The faint signs of a rainbow appeared amidst the mountain, and, as I watched, it began to solidify its arc through the sky.

Follow the Recipe

"This happens every time. You don't follow the recipe and look at the results."

The Spy and the Way

Spinning in circles, the poets sang the world.

F is for Failure

Oh well. So far, so bad, so what. Many mistakes were made. Let us take a vacation from all that nonsense. Perhaps, in the morning, things will be different. He sat at the back of the bus, or was it the middle of the bus? Memory tells us that when he looked to his right there was a person. Ah yes, the back of the bus. He looked to his right, and there, outside the window, riding in her truck, was Cat. He hadn't seen her in what? Many moons?

Cat rode alongside the bus in her white truck. She made the turn down towards the ocean. She was a serious driver. This is a metaphor, of course.

When I say crazy, I mean something very specific. Recently, I was confusing it with insane, I think. What kind of librarian determines who can stay or stay out of the library? What kind of librarian are you?

So far, so bad, so what? So much better, perhaps, if it was so good?

And The Devil Makes 6

Born Under a Hilo Moon

A tomato, born of the vine. Planted in the soil by the hands of a human. Growing up amidst the shadow of the lemongrass. A fine tasting tomato. A red tomato, no larger than a thing of its size. Of roundish shape with a few slight brown scars, marking its history of growth on its skin. A fine tomato. But where is the tomato now?

Sybil stood before a group of thousands, nay millions, nay billions. She spoke of her heart. She spoke of the simple changes that could be made. The simple changes, that, supposing we all agreed on the basic premises of where we were and where we wanted to go, would be of little, if any, inconvenience to anyone at all. Supposing, that is, that we all agreed on the basic premises of where we were and where we wanted to go. Of course, there were some that very much did not agree. Still, powerful as this group was, they did not control the entirety of the world. And sometimes, an argument can be made that neutralizes any stated objections, and if someone, or a group of someones, is to continue to object, they will be forced to declare their true intentions, at which point it can become clear, to the rest of us, that these objections are not legitimate reasons for us to alter our plans for change. Off stage, after her speech, you could hear her giggle into the microphone, which was not yet turned off.

"And what am I? Chopped liver?"

Chopped Liver

"So what's that, then? You chasing rabbits?"

Broomstick shuffled through the growth at the back of the house, as Marchie dropped off his nighttime deliveries to the mailbox and the rubbish bin. It seems that the writer was in his bed, dreaming that impossible dream again.

"It's an Ishtar egg hunt. We're searching for a golden ring in a compost pile."

The snake-like lizard crawled over the dead leaves, paused. "And who might you be?" it asked. The human sat amidst the ferns, listened to the rain falling all around, and tried to spot the bird that was chirping that tune. The human took off its spectacles and polished the glass with the purple cloth that it had draped over its chest and stomach. There was a sensuality to the land, there was. There was, indeed.

"You know, I cannot rely on you to edit something that you do not read."

Croeber

"Now that's a coincidence," he wanted to say. He imagined it, this speaking of words. She walked down the street, holding an umbrella. They stood by the side of the front, trying to pry open the thing that was stuck. Such a thing awaited them, perhaps.

The Landlord

The Land Surveyor walked through the parking lot.

A Devil of a Timekeeper

"One, two, one two three, one, two."

Cat looked around. Bits and pieces filtered through the screen. They were talking of specific things, it seems. She took the knife that she had been polishing and held it up to the light. The long holiday was over.

Sybil settled into her comforters. It was, comfortable, more or less. The wind blew into the window. The sun shown through the yellow curtain, casting a glow on the books of pink and grey. Sybil embraced her fears. Sybil closed her eyes. Sybil smiled.

"Ah, I see," said the M.C.³ "It is not really all about me."

Part 7

"What is the square root of thirty-six?" he asked.

"Your language is so imprecise." Cat looked down at her meal. She immediately regretted speaking. It was hard to pinpoint when exactly she started opening her mouth. Surely there must be some sort of record. She looked over at Sybil, who was playing the piano with a certain verve, or, some might say, panache. She took a sip of the purplish liquid that someone had poured into her short squat glass. She licked the sticky residue off of her lips. She took another sip.

"But..." Marchie was confused. He stared at the house guest from across the table. Why were they sitting at a table? It is unclear. "It is unclear," thought Marchie. He turned to his left and saw his Auntie drinking her wine. There was some sort of relation to the characters in the story, it seems. Perhaps.

0γ

The path led back to itself. She looked out over her breasts, over the precipice, wondering. Was she on the path? Was she part of the path? It was just a couple of characters that happen to exist in her mind, or on the screen, or on the page, or...

"Burp."

She did not speak this word, but made the actual sound of a burp. A small, dignified burp. She picked up the violin. The violin made sweet, beautiful music to her ears. It was some sort of festival. Indeed, they were marching.

An Entry into the Magical Arts

"Did you sign up for the summer session?"

"Ah, no, not yet. Well, I am not a student, see."

The librarian thought a bit about preparing a job application. There was a musical theme that involved a mustache. It was a disguise, see. The librarian rubbed his chin. The writer started clickity clakking in his freestyle rhythm. It is easier to recommend a book if one can comment on its innards.

Cat walked out of the theater, the dancing blues ringing in her head. For student work, it was pretty good, she thought. The story was about a god that became a tree and ended the times of famine. She walked down the street and breathed the air, which was fresh. There were mountains and such. Perhaps it was a sunny day.

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There was a computational error on the math box.

8

The Next to Last Chapter

42

The movie ended with fifteen minutes remaining on its time allotment. To be exact, it was a more specific amount of time than the previously mentioned estimation. The saxophone played its lonesome tune in the other room. Movement could be heard all around. The creaking of the stairs. The creaking of the floor. The shutting of doors. The whistling of trees. The record came to an end and a relative silence ensued.

The librarian posted his announcement to the message board:

"The library will be closed during the period betwixt the spring and the summer. Please contact the librarian if you have any questions. Thanks."

The writer settled into his writing chair. He removed his disguise of glasses and mustache. He wiped the snot off of his nose with the back of his knuckles. He kept writing until the time began to slow. He kept writing until he was finished saying what he wanted to say.

The End

about the author



