

QUESTIONS FOR ANOTHER DAY

By: Brendan Donahue

[Author's Note]

While I wish I could claim ownership to the writing you are about to read, my principles simply cannot allow me to lie, and I promise you I am not lying to you, and in this case, the truth of the matter may be far stranger than any story made up to entertain.

So please believe me when I say that I found these words typed on small sheets of yellowed paper, wrapped up in a little brown paper package no larger than a thumb, tied with twine, inside an HO scale model blue boxcar. Once I saw what I had in my hands, I took the pages over to my microscope, and under magnification, methodically retyped the words as you see them below.

For reasons that will become clear as you read through the enlarged manuscript, I have edited the fragments into what I believe to be the chronological order in which they were written. Some of the fragments had titles, but in cases in which the author did not provide a title, I have given one which fits the overall theme.

Whether or not the manuscript I found was written under the conditions it claims, I cannot say for sure, however, I swear that I have told the truth about how I acquired such a curious artifact. I can only hope that any who read on encounter the same heartfelt substance that had encouraged me to write and share this story.

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### 1, FALLING DOWN,

I can't tell if I miss her because I really loved her, or if I just lust for the time before I fell, and she's come to represent it in my mind.

### 2, WELCOME TO TINSEL TOWN, JACKASS,

In the basement of my modest single-story ranch house, located on the outskirts of the small rural college town I lived in, I had been building an increasingly intricate model train diorama/layout/set/exhibit. One day as I towered over my tiny mountains, holding a jar of white model dust, powder for the small ski season coming up, I suddenly tripped and fell. Slow adrenaline flooded my body as I floated frozen in time for a moment, contemplating the disaster and pain (spiritual/physical) it would cause me to crash and trash the model train set I had worked so tirelessly on for so many nights.

However, instead of crashing into the tiny trains, I just fell through the air, and landed in a normal-sized haystack, next to a red barn, alongside a dirt road, all within a grassy green field, with large snowcapped mountains in the distance. In far-off views, I could see lines moving criss-cross along the ridges, but I had no idea where I was.

### 3, MEMORIES FROM BEFORE,

It's been so long since I last saw her face that I can't remember every detail anymore, or really any detail for that matter. But of the faint fuzzy image I do seem to recall, it's all in yellow and distinctly happy. We're in a field and I can hear her muffled laughter, even though we never married and she hated tall grass fields (a nightmare of hers involved a field at night with grass too tall to look over). The memory is like a rusted can bearing a faded design, but this memory is still so precious and romantic to me. I don't want it to slip away but I worry that time will take its toll the longer I spend here.

Contrasted to my memory of the Rothko, and it is night and day. I can't see her face clearly, but I can recall every step it would take me to bring myself from my front door to the place where I'd stand and look at the Mark Rothko painting down the street in the art museum where I used to live. I can't remember if she

had freckles, but I can still see as clear as crystal, that black canvas and the nuanced differences in bleak tone across one corner to the other. Maybe this is because the Rothko is just a black square, or maybe it's because I would sometimes stand in front of it for 10, 15, 30 minutes (one time I spent an hour) and because I spent so long studying the canvas I remember it.

#### 4, AN ENDING,

I'm living in a miniature world, and her face gets fuzzier each day, and the only thing I can remember is a black square, meant to be a sadness, painted.

#### 5, HUMORLESS BONES,

In truth, I have no idea how long I have been here in the world I made for tiny things to have a purpose. At first, I had begun to write because I thought it would help me keep track of time, but I think I was still trying to process what happened and so the writing became less of an exorcism of the black square in my heart, and more so some sort of summoning incantation for sadness. I was planning on walking off the roof of the red barn after I wrote the previous section, but once I got on top I was startled by the view that I knew I had created.

My situation deserved a personal chuckle at the very least. I was walking around in the model train set layout I had spent so long pouring love and care into. No map was needed because I could still remember the planning and placing of most of what was around me.

#### 6, OBSERVATIONS ON THE SETTING,

My original fear of having spent so much time here in this little world that I would forget all that was important to me turned out to be a farce. While it surely seemed that I had spent days and even weeks already (there is a 'day' and 'night' but they fake, so the exact amount of time is up to conjecture) walking around my lonely landscape, my memories might be said to be perfect. I can remember everything I have done since falling down. On top of that, my memories from before I fell have not seemed to diminish or change either. My wife still runs through that green fuzzy field laughing, and I still feel that love for

her I've clung to so many times since my fall.

And still, the detail of the Rothko haunts me as well. In many ways, it feels more real than anything that's happened to me since I fell. I think that's why I hold on to it too, but it angers me how crisp and sharp the painting is in my mind, while she can only run away from me in the grassy field forever. I would do anything to see her eyes again. I would commit everything about her to my memory if I could so that if I had to carve a marble statue in her likeness, I would be able to.

#### 7, HYPERBOLIC DISH ARRAY,

The Rothko haunts behind me as I go forward through the world of my inner mind and my Love runs ahead of me, just to the point where I can't see her face clearly when she turns around to smile. Sometimes I feel like I have just gone insane and that I'll snap out of it any second, waking up on a park bench, or washing up on an island's shore.

Today, I walked to the set of (now giant) hyperbolic dishes I originally planted as a joke. When my Love saw me placing dishes onto the layout, she made a clever joke I cannot remember. She never took much interest in the layout but I caught her once or twice down in the basement alone, fiddling with a tree here or there.

#### 8, APPLE TREES,

I never get hungry and I don't think I have to eat, but I have found an apple tree that bears fruit so sweet. The tree is on a hill and it overlooks the grand forest, with a nice section of the river in sight. A breeze seems to complement everything about this pleasant spot I've found. In my mind, I can almost see my Love sitting next to me. It has been so long since I've heard any music but I swear I could hear her hum a lullaby.

#### 9, CLOUDS AS KINGDOMS IN THE SKY FLOATING ABOVE,

Above the cradle of the apple tree, in white stone buildings, clouds as kingdoms in the sky rose far past what I could see. Up there so high and so far

away, billowing knights jousting in tournaments called for in good faith by Kings wearing puffy pointed crowns.

#### 10, LIFTED BY WINGS OF WHITE,

Cream-colored stiff feathered were the wings that swooped down from above. Claws of white iron and a beak of pillow mark the bird that clutched me in its grasp and carried me higher and higher into that Kingdom of Cloud.

Circling carefully around the cascading castle towers competing in a race I'd never heard of, with a prize unattached to anything I'd ever known, the cloudy bird carried me onwards and upwards. I tapped his claw and asked him where he was taking me, but the wind rushed past too quickly and my words floated by without anyone hearing them like a stick in a stream.

Yet the bird had heard me and it spoke to me and cherish tones of violins tuned before a concert. "The king wishes to see you." I tried to ask, "Why me?" but that stick was cast down the stream unseen by any flying bird.

#### 11, IN THE HALL OF THE GRAND CASTLE PALACE,

At the far end of the cloudy hall sat the Cloud King on his throne. Next to him was his Princess of Mist. The vaporous hawk departed, leaving me to walk forwards towards atmospheric royalty. My steps light, and my back straight, I greeted them with a soft bow. I asked how I may serve your majesty, to which the Cloud King rumbled a laugh.

"Do not fear, fair ground walker, for my daughter merely wished to meet one of your people for her birthday," thundered the Cloud King.

I leaned forward, bent down on my knee, and introduced myself as their faithful emissary hailing from the world of Grass and Dirt. I looked up into her misty eyes of blue azure, so deep in the watery vapor of her gaze, I hardly realized the interior of the cloudy chapel turning into evening colors. All around me weddish tones dominated columns of mist and tiles of wet puffy stone. As I reached out so that I might kiss her hand and quench my thirst, a howling wind whisked away that scene around me and my grasp whiffed air as I began to fall, away from my nebulous love.

## 12, WAKING UP,

I don't remember hitting solid earth, all I remember is waking up, under that apple tree I was convinced my Love planted for me. No doubt I had fallen asleep while I looked out across the landscape and at the first clouds I could remember spying since I fell. Purple, red, and yellow, and anxious with thought, I wondered if I would ever see my cloudy love again, or if those Vaporous Knights, in their puffy castle towers, were merely fragments of a comfortable dream.

## 13, REUNITED AND AT PEACE,

All around me, she walks and paints her Love with a bristled brush in stokes long and short. I remember building the woodcutter's shack deep in a grove among the trees of the Great Forest, and wondering if I would ever get the chance to live in it and chop wood so that I might keep the fires of our passion alight. I remember creating the river, although I cannot figure out how I ever did such a thing. If I sit and close my eyes, I can see everything that has happened to me, but I cannot tell what is real. If I let my thoughts wander downward, I can see only a black expanse, so deep in its color that I can barely make out areas that are a little lighter than others. If I let my thoughts lift into the air like a balloon, heated by mere warmth, I am no longer thinking but running along with rushes in smears of green, following the sound of Love.

## 14, MY FINAL DREAM,

My memory is perfect and everything I say is true.

One night under the influence of Her apple tree and Her lullaby, I had a dream that I was driving at night along a road cradled by trees. For a brief moment, as my headlights cut through the darkness, I could make out a wooden shack. As I passed by, I thought I saw myself but much older, sitting at a wooden table looking out the window directly into my own eyes.

I woke up from the dream startled and started walking down the hill. There were lights on in the distance emanating from residential architecture I recognized, with Lovely activity going on inside.



