

The Ghosts Knocking At My Door

An Excerpt from the book: What is to Be Undone

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*The victim who is able to articulate the situation of the victim has ceased to be a victim:
he or she has become a threat.*

James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work*

Raise your hand, bite your tongue Conversation is over and done

We let 'em out, we let 'em in

We'll let 'em know when it's the tipping point, the tipping point Tears for Fears, *The Tipping Point*

Author's note:

This is a section of my book, *What is to Be Undone*.

And it is not necessarily easy reading.

The book has a singular focus: we face an impossible moment in this global, dying civilization. In the violent fits of fascistic might, we see the old colonial apparatus showing itself in full light. For many of those held captive by it, the reality of its systemic brutality has been kept at bay. And for the rest, that brutality has been a lived experience.

The veneer is quickly fading, and the costs of this technological nightmare are exponentially impossible. We face a world where climate instability has shaken every facet of life as our species has known it.

Everywhere, the consequences of this Empire flood our lives, and that will only continue.

The point is this: civilization is dying, but we don't need to share its fate.

It is never too late to fight the Leviathan. And I don't say this in a way to instill false hope or naivety: there is no guarantee we survive this. *That is all the more reason to fight.*

How the book unfolds is meant to identify the falsehoods civilization is built upon: to lay waste to ideas that History has led the victor by divine right. Civilization is a willingness to brutality, and it has advanced, not by ingenuity, but by opportunism and cruelty.

This chapter is a plea to understand how deeply civilization's narratives burrow, showing how vital it is to divest from this horror by facing our own.

The path of the book is a series of challenges to the way we view and interact with this world, culminating in a plea to understand that the fires have come for this Empire, and they inevitably will again.

We need to understand what we face, because all life depends upon it.

By dragging it into the light, we free ourselves to act in kind.

This section draws me in as a character because it had to. I did not intend for that to be the case, but it came out this way. As such, there are content warnings for triggering sections.

If necessary, please heed them.

I've been struggling to write this. I really have.

I keep asking myself why, but it's because I'm dancing around it all. I know why.

What I had planned to write and what I need to write are two different things.

There are many aspects about this book, in particular, that kind of hedge me out of my own comfort zone. There is no doubt that's important, especially when the book is ultimately about seeing civilization and its realities from literally any other perspective than that which civilization sells us.

I know how hard that can be. Because these things unfold infinitely, don't they? We're moving from the artificial safety of preordained boundaries. We want to believe that there's an adult in the room, for all the horrors that civilization can throw at the world. We want to believe that there's a bottom for how much evil individuals and organizations are capable of unleashing.

The truth is that there isn't.

You and I might have boundaries and limits, but those that seek power and control just do not have those things. You see, civilization didn't invent horror. It didn't invent the capability of doing terrible things to other living beings. It didn't invent cruelty.

Those things all existed. To a large degree, egalitarian societies function because they saw this from the outset. They don't hide from cruelty. They make tales of it. They put energy into conflict resolution. They dealt with these things before they could become endemic.

They were capable of having hard conversations, of doing hard things. And all the better for it.

What civilization did, stretching back into the origins of domestication, was different.

It *rewarded* cruelty. It took nightmares and gave them forms.

It birthed institutions of barbarity.

Civilization gave the tools of abuse, and coerced a social order which granted power to abusers.

Every single step of the way, the worst things imaginable were empowered and encouraged.

It took time. It took atrocities. It took the tiering of society, and the suppression of many at the hand of the increasingly fewer. Every step, it just gets worse, and it grows larger.

Then it spreads, by force.

It conquers. It colonizes. It steals what it needs to grow. It becomes the war machine. It becomes the police. They build the fortress, and all of its walls have two sides. It exports its brutality. It imports its spoils of war. It standardizes and compartmentalizes itself. It becomes industrialized. Capitalists create a measure for it. Socialists respond in kind.

Of all the possible routes life could take, we end here every time. Not because it was inevitable, but because no amount of hindsight will change the fact that we live in a world haunted by the means of its own extermination, thousands of times over. And every single threat was constructed from within it.

We're in a nightmare, not of our own making, but of our own circumstance.

And that's pretty fucking terrifying.

What I want to do here is something I've done many times. I want to tell you about the world beyond civilization. A world that grew us, as a species. A world full of fantastic things. An imperfect place, where horrible things can still happen.

Even still, it's a world that exists. One that civilizers have long since tried to deforest, form, control, and pave. One that remains under clear assault from civilization.

But it's a place where the worst things ever possible, the worst and most insidious thoughts ever concocted weren't given unending fuel and power to do as they please.

I'm going to tell you the story about what I call *primal anarchy*. It's a short hand I use for a thing we lack that language and, hence, vision, for. That part inside all of us, shaped over millions of years, that refuses to be tamed. That world we come from. That part of us that exists beyond civilization.

I'm not selling an ideology, so take from it what you will.

I've gotten well acquainted with telling this story and holding the role of narrator for myself. What's different here is that

I can't tell this story honestly without also being the subject.

To be clear, I am *not* exceptional. My point is the exact opposite.

Statistically speaking, you're more likely to have endured serious abuse than not. Civilization exists by trying to break us in eight billion different ways. It needs us to not see the lines that connect us.

I'm telling my story because I have told this tale for decades now, and, even after all of that, when my own story fell apart, I was as shaken as anyone else would have been. All the same principles and all of the same patterns were at play in my life, and I sensed them, but I couldn't permit myself to feel them. I hadn't allowed myself to accept them.

I thought there was a bottom. I thought there were some adults in the room, as I had been trained to believe, *despite* the fact that I was actively at war with them.

And yet, the bottom fell out, as it inevitably would. Nothing was stopping it.

I knew the horrors that civilization was built upon. Still, I had to see them, with force.

There's no comfort here. Not really.

But if we're going to have an honest discussion, then this is where it begins.

Civilization, and all the brutality it is built upon, has no bottom.

It will watch you die, its boot pushing your head just below the surface of the water, and it will tell you that you can still breathe. That the boot is your own. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Sell out everyone and everything you ever loved. You can sink or swim.

The boot is not your own.

The flailing body, unable to survive its impossible surroundings, that is you.

Civilizers, of all forms, will tell you until your last dying breath that it is all in your hands, and it has those tied too.

If we are not able to do the work of confronting the civilization embedded within ourselves, then we will never be free enough to fight it beyond us.

And this world really fucking needs you to fight.

The Ghosts Knocking At My Door

In the world of anarchists, using your actual name isn't the norm.

So, I've regularly joked about how my actual name is just a boring ruse of a pen name.

It's a funny enough thought to me, but, in all reality, my actual name is absolutely random.

Kevin, as far as I've been told, has zero meaning to my adoptive family. I wasn't named after anyone, and the name isn't the kind of thing that really pops off the shelves. Tucker, on the other hand, is the Ellis Island name granted to my adopted grandfather, who was my primary abuser. I genuinely feel little connection to either, though I've made just enough of a mark with them to ruin the experiences of other Kevin Tuckers the world over. I'm sure countless job prospects ended when a quick internet search dives into the world of anarchist "eco-terrorists" and the like.

It's too late to say sorry, but it's one of the few things I wouldn't apologize over.

When I was adopted, I came with what I call a pedigree. A few pages of random notes about my birth parents and their families, names redacted. There's also a single page of medical notes from when I was born. Between the two, one says "only Tommy" and the other says "Tommy

#2.” Either there was some confusion or I was both the first and second round pick of an alltime orphan name. I think it’s funny, but just kind of indicates the lack of connection I have with my moniker.

My own name is as placeless and rootless as I had been.

Above all else, I have always known that I was absolutely not meant to exist. A feeling I’ve taken very seriously, probably only made worse by the fact that I originated within the body of a teenage cheerleader.

She most definitely did not want me to exist. And I can absolutely sympathize: she was 16, and children in this society have no power. Even over their own bodies.

She hid during most of the pregnancy, and never looked at me when I was born. Again, who can blame a child for that?

But I’m not saying these things to get sympathy, none of this is. I’m saying it because it’s an important part of the background to this entire story.

About how I became, by design, an *unreliable narrator* within my own life.

Unreliable narrator: it’s a literary device that I ran into, and, for what will be obvious reasons, it stuck with me. Abuse, trauma; these things cause our minds to fracture. The nature of the society we exist within is that all efforts to connect with others on an empathetic level during any period of hardship feeds into this hyper-realized sense of the individual. It’s the opposite of conflict resolution.

Trauma doesn’t happen because horrible things happen. Horrible things have always happened. That’s just the nature of life.

What is different is that society is built around shared understandings. The closer that society is to the land, the more there are cultural understandings for both the reality that horrible things can happen and methods for coping with them if they do.

Healing is in our DNA. It literally comes from within us and from sharing our presence and vulnerability with others in periods of loss and mourning. Maybe even depression too.

Egalitarian societies—which is to say anarchistic societies, by any other name—occur not because of an absence of wrong-doing or dire circumstances, but because of their willingness to confront them. It’s hard to not just beat that point over the head endlessly. And as this story goes, I will, to some degree.

But this isn’t a minor thing.

It can sound trivial, if you aren’t spending huge portions of your life trying to understand all the ins and outs of it. The atomization of trials and tribulations, of pain, of joy, of grieving, and of elation, down to this dismally minute level of individuality, is solely a civilized problem.

Largely speaking, it’s a relatively modern one too.

The entire framework of your life can be restructured around these moments. And the predators will most definitely circle in.

Domestication is the force by which plants and animals are corralled, literally and figuratively, into a form that functions best for civilizers. In both cases, we’re talking about extensive breeding programs, meant to dull the natural tendencies of any wild life.

It’s a term that typically is meant in a biological context: namely, there is a change on a genetic level towards tendencies, behaviors and properties that suit agriculture. There’s a lot of argument about just how much of this change is real versus how much is civilization’s hubris, and it’s a sincere argument.

At the far end, we have changes in the ways plants reproduce, limiting the ability to survive. Or genetic anomalies like the Cornish Cross chicken, whose breasts grow so quickly that they will crush their lungs and hearts if they live long enough. Poor bastards aren't even considered an actual breed of chicken, they're actually listed as an industrialized product.

But those are extremes.

While decades of breeding can cause sheep's horns to grow back through their skulls, none of it is going to make them innately easier to fully tame. Feral applies to domesticated plants and animals that have reverted to their wild state. It shows, as it always has, that the façade of control really only goes so far. And so, we wind up back at the question of domestication once more.

I had talked about domestication within human societies, and still do. But the term has a social connotation. I've increasingly given up on having two definitions of domestication, because, in all reality, I think it was always going to be a losing battle to uphold a dichotomy where one truly doesn't exist.

We are not domesticated. We are not changed on a genetic level in ways befitting of civilization.

We are what most plants and animals are because of civilization: captives.

To the degree that we don't see ourselves as being held by force, that's the power of the narratives of civilization. There's that unreliable narrator speaking. It's all force. It's all beating that wild being within you into submission with unending violence and force.

It's a fear of your own feelings and observations. Your mind flinches at the thought of crossing its lines, even if you're openly at war with the systems of control that exist.

The reality of this is not hard to see.

The truth is that captivity is something that takes a lot of force. Organized, institutionalized violence and the threat of retribution or fear of withdrawal of any miniscule freedoms offered are no small feat. That's what all civilizations are built upon. A combination of physical domination and mental subordination.

There's just enough happening at all times to keep you thinking that you exist within civilization because you choose to. Because you would be so much worse off without it. If you're familiar with patterns of trauma and abuse, the language is identical. That's no accident. We experience all of this hundreds of times daily, in a thousand rituals of domination, both seen and unseen.

The fight or flight in our hunter-gatherer minds is so frazzled at all times by arbitrary choices and threats that we can be made dormant enough to be controlled. Even if we're largely sedentary and reduced to doom-scrolling the infinity machines in our hands, the narratives of civilization have us coming and going. It's exhausting. And that's entirely to civilization's bidding.

Certainly, the first kings may have prayed to their gods for such absolute control. Their religions affirmed it; the might of force fortified it. Technology, ultimately, enabled it.

Yet, being the free-ranging fodder for Empires does not make us domesticated.

Despite thousands of years of social and physical control, they still need to keep us constantly lulled into some combination of fear of pain and punishment while keeping us praying for some kind of reward or recognition. As hierarchies advance and the weapons of civilization excel, the need for perpetual reminders of civilization's power rise, not fall.

The anxiety that we're riddled with is taken as a failure to adapt. And it is, but it's a systemic issue. This is, simply put, not the lives we were meant for. In my three decades as an anarchist, I'm seeing more acknowledgement of that, broadly speaking.

Another sign that the civilized hopes for complete control will never be actualized. Depression, all the same.

We're at the other end of the spectrum, where we've now been coming up with an entire language surrounding the inabilities of most of us to be "neurotypicals." A construct based off of a near impossibility. We're looked down upon for not being able to integrate with machines.

Frankly, we're so much better off with it and for it.

The frameworks, though, are still built around needing you to be a legal, fitting part of the machine. You still need to function in the world that has rejected you and your wild, threatened mind. You need to work. You need to pay rent. You need to play your part in keeping the system going.

The efforts to understand it all further are good and useful, but they need to go further.

We need to understand what it means to be held captive.

We need to see how it is that we become the unreliable narrators in our own lives. How we constantly dismiss all the gut feelings and the red flags. How we are made to be complicit in our own captivity.

Because while we haven't become domesticated, in a biological sense, we are still stuck in a scenario where we're having to act normal when the world is anything but. Nothing has meaning, while everything is threatening.

What can happen is that we can break.

And that's exactly what I did.

Narratives with Consequences

It becomes very important for the last Leviathan to deny the existence of an outside. The beast's voices have to project Le-viathanic traits into humanity's pre-Leviathanic past, onto nature, even into the unknown universes.

Fredy Perlman, *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*

Resiliency is, unequivocally, a remarkable trait.

It is, however, never a compliment.

Resilience is vital for any living being existing on this finite planet, full of flux. It's how our species, throughout all of its lineage, has managed to stay around. Both for better and, at times, for worse.

The thing is that life is hard. There are challenges we must be able to handle, whether or not we can foresee them. Over time, they come to be tested: extremes being things like Ice Ages and other periods of drought and famine.

We are capable of adaptation.

That alone has shaped so much about who we are, as living beings, much like any others.

That is completely fundamental to the lives we have spent the vast majority of our existence on this Earth as: nomadic hunter-gatherers. That's well over 99.999% of our collective timeline. But I'm a stickler for details; nomadic hunter-gatherers certainly still exist, despite civilization's efforts to eradicate them.

While clearly not all societies are nomadic hunter-gatherers, it's the only way of living that has remained a constant for the entirety of our existence.

The problem I have with “collective timelines” is that they have all kinds of intentionally confusing errors like this. There is an insistence that something happened at one time, instead of simply in places at different times. Civilization, according to the civilized, flows from the origins of agriculture. A supposed changeover in the sands of time. One that took place somewhere in the range of 10 to 20 thousand years ago. Empires rise, expand, conquer, and grow. Genie is out of the bottle, humanity has changed.

And so it goes.

Except it doesn't.

The simpler narrative is rarely the true one. And the violence the spread of civilization has taken, the insistent need to continually suppress the wildness of this world, the methodical means by which Empires are sustained, and the revolving door of resources they feast off until famine; all of these things are the litmus test that this narrative will always fail.

There are narratives. Some are articulate and misleading. Others are just outright lies.

The narrative, and all its implications, that we were once all hunter-gatherers and then, suddenly, not, is horrifically insidious. It is erasure, first and foremost, but I don't need to really belabor the point: nomadic hunter-gatherers *still* exist.

There is no telling of the narratives of civilization where this is a mere footnote. To hell with history and its dust-bins, lay down thy sword here: the world of hunter-gatherers, that etched out and formed our being, still exists within societies. And it still exists within us.

But to hear the latter, you have to accept the former.

You may not hear much about these societies, but, if you haven't, you have now. For the most part, these are societies that continue into our world of modernized horrors because they have managed to evade it. There's an accepted term here: voluntarily-isolated Indigenous societies. The previous term was uncontacted societies, which carried that erasure and removed a hard-fought degree of autonomy that was certainly merited. The language of uncontacted belies the old, stale Noble Savage tales, as though these people know nothing of civilization and, would they be exposed to it, would probably take it up.

This is how fine the layers of erasure can really be. Because not a single one of these societies has gone without contact with civilization. They have had contact, almost always violent, and they said no.

You may hear about them when they make headlines.

And on November 17, 2018, they did.

John Chau was an American missionary.

He had personally made illegal attempts to reach the voluntarily-isolated hunter-gatherers we call the Sentinelese. They live on the North Sentinel Islands of what has become colonial India. Otherwise, known as a part of the Andaman Islands.

Chau had been a part of evangelical training boot-camps in Kansas City, part of an on-going missionary effort to bring civilization to all the Indigenous peoples of the world, by means of Christianity.

If it sounds familiar, it should. This has been the siren's song of Europe's colonial exports. Death and destruction, always a gift from the white hand of god. The death rattle of Earth, in the form of hymnal narratives to suffocate all the myths and realities beyond their control. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The illegality of Chau's intrusion was an exceptionally hard earned one. By nature of isolation, Chau's civilized body, spreading from the States, was the trojan horse of civilization. A contagion

of spells and complexity, and, like all missionaries prior, carried diseases more fatal than the World-Eater of Leviathan's landless narratives.

As always, he still went.

Missionaries like this want to earn the heavenly credit and Earthly bounty of having bested the autonomy and isolation of peoples completely uninterested in meeting them. These voluntarily-isolated societies are the trophies of missionaries. To be the first, or, in this case, the last, to "make contact."

Words matter. They shape the stories we're capable of hearing by limiting the words we're not supposed to hear. The Sentinelese were not "uncontacted." They knew well of what the civilizers would bring, and they had seen the realities of civilization unfold upon their relatives in the Andaman Islands before.

The Dutch had become a presence among the Andaman Islands in the 18th Century.

It was British colonizers who had made the wounds of contact permanent. In 1858, the British establish the first of numerous penal colonies in the Andaman Islands. As always, the expansion of Empire is always at the hands of captives. It was the role of the prisoners to carve out into the boundless wilderness to start turning a fortune for the Empire.

The means by which captive Europeans could be sent to the expanding frontlines of civilization, into a vast wildness of nomadic hunter-gatherers, and stay within the confines of their captors is a familiar one. They were terrified. They had been told that the Indigenous populations were fierce cannibals—an embellishment as old as historical time. The reality of their purported cannibalism wasn't really in need of testing. The fierce part was, for obvious reasons, well-founded.

Never have the civilizers come in peace. And this was a hard lesson the Andaman Islanders, across the board, never needed to learn. But they did. They had no reason to see prisoners as less-than colonizers, they were put there for that reason. The first load to the penal colony on the Andaman Islands was actually almost entirely comprised of political prisoners. They should have had the most reason to defect, but such is the power of narratives.

When looking at who we have labeled as the Great Andamanese, what we are really seeing is the power of reduction. We see this the world over. Racism has granted the ability for an elite to determine what races exist and which people belong to them. It's what's turned entire continents of completely separate societies into a cluster. Africans, for example. Native Americans, another.

Here, we're looking at the Great Andamanese.

By the British count, in the same period that penal colonies are being established, we are told their population is upwards of five to six thousand. What we're really talking about is a number of distinct cultures, upwards of ten language groups, not all mutually understood. They become Great Andamanese not by birth, but by contact. In many cases, when they are taken as slaves.

The reduction, however, rides alongside the grim reality that disease, captivity, deprivation and killing unfolds. It is absolutely literal. While that original number remains unclear, a 1901 census puts it squarely at 625. And through the Second World War, that toll falls until we have only 48 were left. We go into the 1970s with 19 individuals, pooled from that original cast of ten languages and cultures.

Utterly abysmal.

This is the world that civilization truly has to offer, but it's never presented as an option.

The Sentinelese hadn't missed the message on what was happening, and it would come to unfold again with neighboring Jarawa peoples, and again with neighboring Onge peoples.

So, the reaction to Chau was beyond clear.

Chau had paid fisherman to take him as close as they would to the North Sentinel Island. Chau called it “Satan’s last stronghold on Earth.” Doubtful, to say the least. But the fishermen had warned him against his mission. They took him anyways, and on his first attempt his canoe was met with hostile reactions, rightfully.

Persistence being what it is, he tried again. This time, he landed ashore and tried to sing hymns and give gifts, to which he had an arrow go through the copy of the Bible he had tried holding out. Crystal clear warning.

Despite that foreboding encounter, he went again. Full of bravado, yet short on sense, he had the fishermen leave him. The fishermen then saw his arrow-ravaged body upon the shore one day, and a burial site the next.

At this point, Chau is globally running across headlines.

The missionary machine, as old as European civilization’s ascent to world power, was a well-greased wheel of Empire. It has never been short of funds, stemming from the holy coffers in its origins, extending to the world oil had built after World War II. Chau, in their eyes, was a martyr of the holy cause. While he was being rightfully mocked and shamed in death, he remained a mechanism for pulling hopeful missionary colonizers into the fold.

The old narrative of ungrateful and savage Indigenous peoples got new meat. Surely, there were more sympathizers this time around, but the push of Empire wasn’t about the detractors. It was about tightening the grip of the financiers.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, after all, are a land of fiscal potential.

Currently, that’s focused on everything from sand-mining to deforestation to the building of a new super-port for India to extend its might further into the Pacific.

Right out in plain sight, voluntarily-isolated Indigenous Peoples had sent a clear message to the world: leave us alone. And right before us, the narrative was taken from them.

Even in death, the would-be civilizers still have more say.

Civilization knows no bottom.

Intermission: Trauma Bonds

Here it goes.

I need to talk about Sam.

I cannot overstate how much I’ve struggled with this. Countless hours in therapy. The nightmares. The arguments within myself. The parts of me screaming not to type this, drowned out by the parts of me that need to say it.

Do you need to read it? I think that is for you to decide.

What I want is for those of you who can read it, to hear me. I want to talk about the abuser for a very simple, but shockingly difficult reason: their horrors, the pain they can inflict, can feel like love.

It took me decades to understand that, and I struggle with it daily. But that’s just the thing, you become entrenched. We become buried in narratives that only serve to destroy and tether us to a reality that neither makes sense, nor gives us anything we are desperately needing. Yet they *knowingly* wear that cloak.

The methods by which we become entrenched into these narratives of power are perfectly insidious. They fall off the red flag radar because we believe that the actuality of their story being wrong is too much to bear. And it is.

Civilization is an entire system built on such endless brutality that our hunter-gatherer minds cannot fathom it. At every step, every second, it could have all been avoided. And yet, here we are. Eyes open, and we're living it. We're suffocating within it.

What we're experiencing is a trauma bond. That phrase can be misleading, and it is often used incorrectly in a way that implies a degree of synthesis or mutuality in that bond.

There is not.

A trauma bond is a form of patterning, used by abusers, which causes the victim to constantly question their own perception of reality. To make the victim an unreliable narrator in their own life and experiences. Endemic gaslighting, where the victim's own well-being is weaponized into a method of behaving in ways that the abuser grants. It becomes the cop, the priest, and the missionary in your head; having you second guess everything you do and constantly over-evaluate your own actions and thoughts, regardless of any audience, to seek approval, recognition, or, at base, a lack of punishment.

Trauma bonds look like many things.

They can be periods of love-bombing or over-zealous sharing of love and joy or pride from an abuser. Sam always hung my art up prominently when I was a kid. The fundamental core is about giving and withholding value. And giving can be seen here as being used to the furthest extent of generosity.

What they are, in a psychological sense, is a system of selfdoubt that will allow the victim to identify core inconsistencies, but a patterning so entrenched that the over-arching thread can be impossible to comprehend. They set off so many red flags that you learn to ignore them. They violate boundaries so much that you feel wrong for having them.

You will apologize needlessly.

You will be unable to confront their repeated violence.

You will be left in a daze of irreconcilable chasms between word and action.

You will feel punished or afraid of punishment.

You will feel shame for what you've done.

You will feel shame for what you have been told you haven't done.

What you are is stuck in a web of chaos that was intentionally created to keep you from your own autonomous existence. You're predicting their movements and buckling to avoid their wrath. You're watching them so hard that you will feel guilt for trying to find yourself at all. And what little of you remains as their consequences dictate your life.

You will feel anything other than your own reality.

The mind is a truly wild thing.

Neuroplasticity, the way that our brains are capable of adapting to situations and rechannel impulses, can feel like a curse. This thing that has made us resilient, as a species, has been used against us by those who created power. And they do it on every level.

That's the thing about society. I don't really care what philosophers have to say about social contracts and things like that.

It's garbage that doesn't serve enough purpose to even bother eviscerating it. It's all a lie.

Almost universally, society is not something that you choose. It's something you're born into.

You, me; every single one of us was born from the same generalized human form that millions of years of evolution have shaped. You inherit habits and tendencies from your parents, true enough, but we were all born as nomadic hunter-gatherers. That's the way our eyes see. The way our bodies move. The way our brains take in feelings and process thoughts.

The things that make us different are our upbringings and our surroundings. The degrees to which the societies we live in have either acknowledged and blessed the land that bares us or refutes and uses it dictates so much about where *you* end and the world begins.

About where you stand with the cosmos.

You could be anywhere and nowhere within civilization, with its universalized religions, politics and forced-air grocery stores. That's not true for any other society humans have created. And, even with this, it's taken far more force than storytelling to make it have holding power.

There's so much more to say about this, and I'll get back to it, but I need you to hear me. I don't say any of this lightly, and I've fought wretchedly within myself as to whether to say it at all: we don't have time anymore. The fascists have pulled all the stops. The gestapo pigs are tackling teenagers over imposed borders and then expelling them to extermination camps.

The pageantry of this dying civilization is over.

We need to be honest. And so, I need to be honest. This is what I have left to give.

This is how entrenched these narratives become.

What I'm going to say is impossible, but I'm going to do it anyways. I didn't want to have a content warning in this book, but, alas, here we are. **TRIGGER WARNING: The following section will discuss abuse, particularly childhood sexual trauma.** If you aren't able to read that, I fully understand, skip the italicized text.

His name was Sam Tucker.

He was born in a place that hasn't existed for a long time. Neither he nor his siblings could remember the name, and I distinctly remember all of them, in their 80s and 90s, arguing about it. He was my grandfather, by way of adoption, through my fathers' side.

He's dead, in real life. But within me, he's both an active threat and something other that I can't call good.

Fucker lived till 95 years of age. My brother, Mike, was also adopted, and was also abused. They're buried in the same cemetery, about 300 feet apart. And it will never sit right with me.

Not only did he live to see old age, he was mentally there too. Oh, how I wish he had suffered, but I know all too well that, in the end, he didn't.

In 2005, I had co-edited the second edition of John Zerzan's anthology, Against Civilization. Two weeks before he died, Sam read my introduction in a hospital bed. Forgive my sins, my twenty-five-year-old self still wanted his approval. And I got it.

I say that, and I feel shame.

I know all the things that I know now, and I still feel fucking shame.

Because when I think of Sam, I cannot reconcile the two things that I know him all too well to be: the one adult in my adoptive family that had shown me love and the one who preyed on me sexually and emotionally. I can still see him, sitting in the corner of the kitchen. Us playing checkers or chess. A bevy of boxes of raisins in a basket before me. The upside-down cupcakes he brought back from the deli. I remember it like it was our place, my haven.

Behind me—because as I'm writing this, I'm there too—over the oddly patterned wooden floor, is the basement door. The place where untold parts of me are hiding. Just behind that, there is a door to

the room, covered in drawings that I had done, and that's the middle room. It's only about ten feet, at most, between the kitchen table I'm sitting at, and his desk. With his matchbook collection.

And I can still see the way the light hit my young hands while he raped me. Over and over again. I was told it was love. I felt like this was something between us.

This is what people do when they feel familial love: they keep secrets. They let those secrets burn inside them. They wash the blood away in the shower down the hall.

They can stand there, crying, but this is the cost of caring.

The fucking monster, and here, over three decades later, I can still see him smiling.

I know every inch of his house. When they finally moved from it, I felt entitled to it. A sense of ownership, to show that I had conquered my lived terrors and nightmares, and lived to understand it as belonging. I could not possibly have articulated it that way then, but I'm unflinching in acknowledging it now.

That's the thing about abuse. That's the thing that no one understands from any step beyond it: it is all-consuming, it is absolutely enveloping.

Sam was not alone. There were others, many of them. My abuse was systemic, and, in numerous ways, made possible solely by Sam, but Sam is where it all comes from. Sam was the template. Sam was the bond. And I seethe with rage that I couldn't encounter him now. I think about feeling proprietary of him amongst my cousins at his funeral. I sat Shiva for this piece of shit. I feel so much anger and rage, and I find it almost impossible to not point it at myself.

But I was a fucking CHILD.

I tell myself that, but really, the truth is, it can happen at any time. Abusers know trauma. They can see it in your eyes. Like a truly depraved predator. Most of them come from it too. That's no excuse. You hit a point in life where you either perpetuate it or spend your life fighting against it.

But is it even a choice? Even that is a question I find myself asking.

The difference is identifiable: does your empathy die in the darkness with you? Or does it fight? Does it struggle? Do you still feel?

A part of me summed it up better than I could: the punishment for survival is remembering.

Survival is its own beast. And it often means you end up having to do the work your abusers never did and never would. That's the curse of it. Living doesn't feel like much of a reward by comparison, but here we are. And if you've gotten this far, I see you, I love you and

I believe you.

I will fight for you.

I find it impossible to say that I will fight for me, but I'm looking at myself, a child, playing checkers with Sam. And I pity the poor fucking bastard, but the poor fucking bastard is also me.

All of this confusion, that's part of the abuse. It's a trap, and a very effective one.

The reason I say that is because you can extrapolate that into any relationship with a power dynamic. And within civilization, that is most of them. At times, it might be all of them. And I'm looking at you and I'm looking at me, and I'm thinking that poor fucking bastard can't see out of it and it's all right there. Right before them.

Right before us.

That abyss between word and action, they can see it, I can see it, you can see it, but they are stuck in the impossibility of reconciling those two things co-existing. That's the horror of it. The worst things imaginable can co-exist with the things we believe to be the best things. True love. Actual care and attention. Affection and pain. And there my child self is, watching blood go down the shower drain.

At the same time, I can see myself hiding beneath the holly bushes out front. Fingers tempting fate by toying with their prickly spikes. It's a hundred feet from the desk, but everything is different. It's play.

Hide and seek with my cousins. And I don't know if hell was here for them too.

Please hear me: statistically, you have been where I have. Whatever about the details of it. The details of who does it—even though it is most likely to be family. The details matter less than the insidious nature of bonding. The way that people who say they love us can do the worst things and then act like they never happened. And you're left to bear all of it.

Right now, I'm standing in it. I do not want to be here. At the kitchen table and held against the desk. If I could look away, I did. Like so many of us, the worst moments of my life were spent fixating on literally anything else. An insignificant detail becomes an anchor while your body is being used against you.

If word ever gets out, it is that hyper-fixation that will be prodded and used against you. How could you not remember? How dare you try to leave the brutality and all of its details from simmering throughout?

Why? Because you get used to dissociating and whispering prayers for a quick and painless death. They come to take over your mind, haunting your soul. The ghosts knocking at your door, reminding you that death feels easier than remembering: than existing.

That anything is easier than surviving.

I do not want to be hiding in the basement. I do not want to be under the stairs trembling because I hear footsteps. But this is where I am. All these moving snapshots of the worst moments in my life. I'm here with you, most likely a complete stranger, but I know you have your basements and closets and showers too.

I'm here right now for one fucking horrible reason: I need you to see that, no matter how close they may ever be, those in power have no bottom. There is no self-correcting measure. There is no systemic punishment. There may never be a consequence.

And if they can do this to us, what hell will they unleash on others?

I'm halfway through my forties and I still hold my sexuality to my chest like it was the only thing keeping me alive. I won't take my clothes off around other people. I have touch aversions, and yet a desire to be held by someone safe. But I have rarely put myself out there and I doubt I ever will again. These things were bore into me as an extension of the abuse I endured by this one person, first and then many others after.

And I have rarely ever trusted a man.

For a moment, I wish he wasn't dead so I could strangle him this time.

So he can know what it feels like to have another person's hand on his throat.

Where do we go from here? I've brought you here and I struggle to know how to take you out. For that, I apologize, I'm trying my best and I'm letting a part of myself speak that normally doesn't. This is the rawness that exists in this place. And this is where I am.

The questions I'm left with are about what this makes me. I'm still doing the thing. I'm still asking the wrong questions when I'm stuck within this place. And this is the way out.

This isn't the place for questions.

This is the place for answers: this is who they are.

This is who Sam is. This is most likely who Sam's father was. This is what Sam probably endured after his father had gone off to America fifteen years before he and his siblings did, barely escaping

the Holocaust. This might be how they had survived. This is what he most likely did to his sons, and two of them did it to me as well, without the pageantry of trauma bonding.

I don't say that to apologize for any of them. They had their chance to remain human, and they opted not to. I owe them nothing, and I owe myself the ability to deny forgiveness. To hold anger, because why the fuck wouldn't I? I'm furious. And I have every right to be. I have to live with all of this. Revenge doesn't demand justification. And I still pray I get my revenge.

The only necks my hands will ever know are those of abusers. Of power-mongers. Of those that have taken civilization in place of their hearts. Those that chose the violence of this system over the pain of humanity. Those who would inflict brutality rather than face their own damaged selves.

I owe them nothing. They deserve pain.

But I'm not speaking to them right now, I'm speaking to you, dear reader.

The pain we have endured never needed to exist, and they fucking hid it in plain sight. It's everywhere.

Pull back, look all around you: the suffering of this world is an overflowing gauntlet of endemic pain and suffering, and for what? A momentary feeling of control? The feeling of embodying the machine that turns souls into profiteers?

This is our moment. Not theirs.

Their legacy would always end in the bloodlust of their own making. And they pull themselves here because they have us asking questions when we already know answers. They have no bottom, we do. Their entire existence is a lie, perpetuated at the expense of ourselves and all life. They know, full well, what they are doing. And they will not stop doing it until we stop them.

We are not the same.

They are nothing without their system. And their systems can always be taken from them.

We have to call them for what they are.

We have to see them for what they are.

I've brought you into my basement. And I will meet you in yours.

I want to look you in the eyes and tell you what I constantly tell myself: it's not your fault. You didn't create these circumstances; you were pulled into them. Intentionally, and likely by force.

We don't need to keep asking these same questions over and over again.

No one is coming to save us, except us.

And this is the truth we fight from.

The emperor, the abuser in any guise, wears no clothes. And we will hang them from the platforms they built for themselves and their lies.

The humanity that has kept us lost in their maze burns bright.

When we see the madness for what it is, their grasp loosens with it. We can end their world easier than they can maintain it. We are proof that another world exists, we just need each other to help us see it.

And Sam, I hope it fucking hurts.

Intermission, Part 2: Incongruencies

I have never thought highly of my own life, but, fuck, life can be so beautiful.

I'm not there, physically, but the place is ingrained into my soul.

It's the Spruce Flats Bog, sitting within the Forbes State Forest in Western Pennsylvania.

It's called a bog, though technically it's a sphagnum glade: a bog covered predominantly with sphagnum moss. And it's unlike many places you will ever encounter.

When you walk out to it, it's like this massive break in the conifer and oak laden forests that just opens up. The spruce trees on the other side of it have a permanent bend to them, the residuals of a constant wind flowing over the glade.

The glade is the remainder of water amassing slowly over time in a natural depression in the rolling mountains, 2,720 feet above sea level. It's a rarity, and that just adds to the stillness of the place. When you feel the winds rolling across the glade, you know that you are, definitively, some place else.

The ecosystem is unlike anything that surrounds it.

The sphagnum moss breeds a different kind of life. You have two separate carnivorous plants. One is the pitcher plant, with its long neck and a paling, yet deep red head, meant to trap flying insects that venture into it. Then you have sundew, an almost impossibly small flycatcher with what you can only call its long red eyelashes that hold morning dew, allowing them to sparkle in the morning sun. And to keep whatever poor prey landed in its grasp.

Both are eye catching, as evolution has made them to be. I understand why flying insects come in for a closer look. I probably would too.

There's something ancient about this place. Speckled with bog cranberries and hedged with blueberry bushes. It spreads far back before civilization ever had shown itself. It will stand long after. One day it'll become a meadow, and then another part of the spruce forest that surrounds it. But that's in geological time, a whole other beast.

The ecology is so absolutely unique.

The final part of the path to the bog is lined with Tamarack trees. And, for a brief moment in the fall, you'll find Tamarack Jack mushrooms beneath them. An extension of the Bolete family, but with an off-putting slime on the top of its cap. It actually fries up very crispy and delicious.

Go off trail, and you'll find threatened plants still surviving. Wild ginseng, here and there, but also Indian Cucumber. The soil has a depth to its color and airiness that your hands can easily slide into. Indian Cucumber is a plant that is endangered, but where it grows, the soil yields so easily that the stark whiteness of its root is exposed easily. It comes out almost immaculately clean, another layer of awe.

I love this place. If I could have my way, I'd have my corpse left to decay in its softness and ancient churning. I would like to become part of it all.

I would like to become the home I've never truly known.

But, even here, the incongruencies of the beauty of this world and the darkness of civilization stand at odds. Alternating with each other so rapidly that holding one inevitably leads to holding the other.

The whole history of State and National Parks is intrinsically tied to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. A reclamation of lands meant to be held in a light of consumption and exaltation. We name it as something other in order to stake a claim upon it. An attempt to make it unfamiliar to those who have a true belonging to this place.

In this case, it is almost entirely Leni Lenape peoples.

The park roads weave throughout the land, navigating creeks, an entire bog, a cluster of vacation homes and some year rounders. Trails run through it, no doubt following the traces left by those who knew them for an eternity. And then you have the forestry trails, where the logging operations of past and present lay.

The surrounding forests have been torn apart and replanted. You can still find some old Eastern Hemlocks still standing if you go far enough. As always, the resiliency of the land has been tested, and so much continues to survive despite civilization's best efforts.

When you head West, the history leaves less question. You have the remains of Fort Ligonier. Originally, it was a crucial part of the British colonial project and expansion, being founded during the French and Indian War. It was defeated twice during the Pontiac Uprisings of 1763. Only to be decommissioned three years later.

Today it stands as a tourist attraction.

Nearby is a sign marking the attempts at forced settlement for the Leni Lenape. Naturally, a sign pales in comparison to the remainder of the revived fort, even if it does have a few wigwams outside of it on display.

The bloodlust of colonizers adds to that stillness you feel in the bog.

That's part of what makes it so unique: those winds that have reshaped the spruce trees surrounding it, they carry with them a yearning for what is lost. What is missing. More to the point: what has been taken away.

It's a pit of irony and resignation; here is a place of such timeless beauty, and yet it bears our scars.

It holds them as a grieving mother holds her impossible loss. And you can feel it, too.

Yet it goes on, because what else can anyone do but keep trudging forward. Carrying that pain within you.

This isn't something intrinsic to this place, but something forced upon it.

And for me, it has just gained another layer.

I had a really close friend, for years. His name was Fischer. He had a love of the wild world that I've barely seen others touch. He had such a hunger for becoming a part of this birthright, and such an impossible time reconciling that removal and the continuing destruction of it.

I've known a lot of people in my life. I've known a lot of people driven to learn more about the wild world, to find or defend their place in it. Fischer was unique. And I felt how that pain tore into him.

How he coped was another story, and I don't need to get into it here. But suffice it to say, there is that spirit of incongruity between the world as it ought to be and the world as it is. That is no mere wrinkle in the fabric of who we are, it's the schism from which all other aspects of our lives flow. Some of us just bare it harder than others.

And that was Fischer.

Every one of his friends could see that.

He was no saint, nor did he need to be. Complexity and time get the best of us, and they had between us. But we shared this love of the wild, this hatred of the machine, and this wild spirit of absolutely fucking with each other and other people. Life is hard enough; we found our joys. We shared a lot, and we butted heads.

We understood each other in ways that I don't think we had the maturity to wrap our heads around. I've said it often here, and I'll say it more, we weren't equipped to unpack the horrors civilization brings, because we are meant to carry those wounds as a mark of shame. To carry them alone, and to bury them within ourselves to remain a productive member of this hellish society.

Even without articulation though, we can still find each other.

Fischer and I did.

Naturally, he found the bog as enthralling as I did. He would come through town or we'd meet up at some gathering and then we'd go out there. There were so many things you could find in this ecological anomaly, so it just kept calling us in.

We'd hunt mushrooms, identify plants and trees, find signs and tracks. I think mostly about when the bog would freeze over in the winter and then be covered in snow with no reason for it to melt. We'd spent hours out there. Foraging, looking at the patterns those dried up heads of pitcher plants made where they poked through the snow and then the wind had moved them.

When I think of the bog, my mind alternates between being out there in the fall and in the dead of winter, but mostly being there with Fischer. My friend who shared my hunger to learn and seek more, but also took it to a place where you could visibly see the agony he felt.

The irreconcilable nature of it; it ate him alive.

We'd get in arguments sometimes when we found something new. I'd be elated to know more, and, at times, he would be driven mad that he was here, in his twenties, having to learn it now. It was that extra step, you see. That was a different kind of madness. And I don't say it with judgement, I say it with understanding.

The onslaught of patterning and compliance had failed on him just a little bit more. But it was enough. It could consume him and, logically, he went to further extents to try and cope with that, which also could drive a spike between him and even his closest friends.

But we still found magical things.

A favorite of mine was tracking this red fox across the frozen bog for hours. Fox are natural tricksters. They sometimes double back on tracks, take large loops, and generally make it a real trip to spend a long time following them to feel like you've walked a closed loop without ever crossing paths. The snow up there could be deep, by Pennsylvania standards anyways. And you'd find signs of every kind of behavior a fox would engage in.

When fox hunt in the snow, they do this vertical leap and then double down quickly almost making a large U, so that when they spring on their prey, they're basically coming straight out of the sky. The wind would have different impacts on how the snow sat there, usually varying in layers as it built. One day was absolutely perfect. We found where the fox got a field mouse and left this perfect face print in the snow.

The impression couldn't have been improved upon by any artist. You could see the indentation of every detail of its face. Every bit of fur and whisker, it was all there. It felt like such a remarkable thing.

It wasn't the first time we'd been close to red fox, of course. We'd both skinned and tanned roadkill fox numerous times already. But this wasn't finding a corpse, it was like getting this perfect snapshot of this fox living its life, even as the mouse's life had ended.

We bore witness. It felt like an honor.

I think about that a lot. Because the reality is that most of what we bear witness to, in this world, is abject horror. We walk past unhoused peoples. We see countless people interacting with cops, and can do nothing for them usually. We find people at their worst, left unhinged in a world unable to handle conflict.

Then comes the genocide. The mass killings. The mass graves. The elderly, laying lifeless over uneaten meals. The children still clinging to their lifeless parents. The parents whose bodies could absorb more of the blast waves of US made bombs dropped upon refugee encampments holding the dismembered bodies of their children, who couldn't.

Starvation. Deprivation. Systemic brutality, layered into an uncaring and impossible world where compassion will only hold you back. Keep you amongst the hungry. Keeping your rage kempt, so that you're grinding your teeth out of your mouth while you sleep. All just to wake up and do it all again. Work. Spend. Die. Buried in debt, torn in isolation. Never catching up. Never truly knowing what it is to live free.

What more do we ever have left to give?

If we allowed ourselves to feel it, what would we have left?

Nothing in this world makes sense, and that's because this entire civilization is hell bent on tearing through every living being to maintain the spectacle that we've built something great. That this thing which profits a very tiny group of miserable and wretched people, has some kind of meaning or purpose.

And for what?

Stop to question it and you'll be just like me, never more than five minutes from being the lunatic screaming on the corner. The human animal within me just screaming at all times that this is absolutely fucked and none of this should be how our lives are lived.

Or you'll also be just like me, not wanting to die, but feeling overwhelmed and drowning in the absolute inability to continue another moment of this life.

Just like Fischer.

Life is an infinite flow. We could have been born at any other time, and this is the shit we're left with? At the same time knowing that others have it even worse, but all to the same ends.

How do any of us keep it together? Well, we don't really have a choice.

The entire world gaslights us into thinking this is it, and everyone is so damn busy keeping it going that we don't stop to ask the questions.

We bear the pain; we turn our heads. We carry on.

Or we don't.

For weeks or months, linear time is lost on me, I've been lost in this place.

I find myself in the bog. And I find myself there with Fischer. The seasons changing without a glitch, just the feeling of being where you're supposed to be, even if only for one second. That's what it is, right? That's the thing that is in the balance when we talk about mental health and when someone breaks. In that moment, where nothing feels right and there's nowhere for any of those feelings to go, how do you keep it together? Do you?

I talked to Fischer about suicide. Recently, not back then. I knew, without question, what I had always known, but had only recently had the ability to articulate. The conversation started, what happens when you can't hold it together anymore? What happens when the weight is unbearable and it feels over? What happens when you don't want to die, but you can no longer live?

We were working on getting together. That's the kind of thing that sometimes makes more sense talked about over a fire, after all. The conversation wasn't over, but the conversation ended.

I got the message, and I wrestled in disbelief. Fischer was gone.

I don't know how long it's been, honestly, and I don't care to look. I don't have the words to speak, but none are going to bring him back. I want to yell at him for not calling me instead, but I also know that place and I understand. I've been close enough too many times to act like I don't get it.

So, I'm standing in the bog, I'm screaming at him. But it's the fall and the light hits his face in a way that highlights him laughing, him smiling. I'm screaming at a good memory of him, and

it's useless. He was happy then, and I'm torn apart, but I don't want to forget seeing him this way.

I'm yelling at a ghost in my mind, but it's a snapshot of the good times.

But it doesn't matter, because my friend is still gone. He lives on, within me, in that place we loved so much, and I still see him there. I hope he is there too.

This is my point.

And I don't want to have to keep kicking this dead horse, but I will until I don't have to. I will until we all see the dead horse and we make the conscious decision to stop ignoring it: the reason that this Empire of Brutality trudges on is because so many of us will either be swept up in the race to accumulate what will only become a dead currency, or we'll be stuck in the abyss, trying to reconcile to impossibilities.

The world as it is. The world as it could be.

It's got us asking questions, and, the truth is, we need to pull the string.

This isn't a question about who we are. This is an answer about who they are.

It's a statement about what they will take from each and every one of us, and they'll do it on full display before millions

or billions of eyes. And then they'll build a statue for the crook who took it.

It is not us who are broken.

It is them.

And when we see it for what it is, then it is our turn to do the breaking.

What I Call Primal Anarchy, A Preface

Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined.

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

There is a fundamental beauty in this world. And, for all my sins, I can be a romantic at heart. That's something that's been thrown at me many times before, and I'm sure it will continue to happen. But I'm all too familiar with brutality to be that naïve.

The beauty of this world is not the peaceable kingdom that religions speak of.

It's not some place of profound ignorance and bliss. It can be violent and harsh, and I make no mistake that predation is a part of it, though it comes from a place of life instead of power. That doesn't make it easier for a parent of any species to lose their child or their parent. It's just the reality of it.

Life is complicated. Living is a series of complex realities and emotions can co-exist.

When I speak of beauty, it includes mourning and sorrow and loss. Having a community to share the burden of the hardest moments together. No one is looking at this and thinking this is great, it's not the kind of thing to place simplified values onto. I embrace that complexity, and I'm fine with it. Context is something we rarely acknowledge, and that's how you get a morality or legality that is supposedly black and white.

But when is that ever the case?

The truth is that simplicity is a part of the narratives civilization thrives off of, because it's all about deferring onto power structures as the measure of all things: good and bad. There are plenty of things that are black and white, that's for sure. I'm

not flinching about being against civilization, just for example. But we're living in a way where the smallest part of our daily interactions and actions have profound global affect. We live and breathe a convoluted and constructed existential crisis.

And that's the point: turn the question back onto us. What would you do? Who would you kill? Who would you impoverish? All these circumstances that actually are real, and suddenly the only time we're questioning them is when it's a deflection onto "well how would you do it?" When "do it" is a stand in for the perpetual and endemic violence of the State.

I'm not interested in that question. I'm interested in the deflections.

One almost always comes up in this case: if you're against civilization, what would you do without it?

Frankly speaking, it's horrible writing. We're working backwards from an entrenchment in the worst-case scenario. We've been stuck with forgone conclusions due to circumstance, not divinity.

To put it bluntly, as I write this, forcibly starved Palestinians are attempting to gather at marked "humanitarian aid sites" to get any food and medicine they can. And, in turn, Israel and its affiliated mercenaries are opening fire, full force, upon the starving Palestinians.

Show me a dystopian fiction worse than this reality. I fucking dare you.

I have been an anarchist for the majority of my life. For almost all of that, I've been overtly at war with civilization itself. I've written, spoken, and argued about it publicly. The question I continually get asked, above all else, is this: how would we survive without civilization?

It always comes in a flippant manner, which the keyboard has no appropriate exclamation for. It's meant to be a final blow: well, how would you solve all of life's problems, hypothetically? It's not a genuine question, even if I've given genuine responses.

The truth is simple: I don't know.

However, that has a very vital follow up: but we, as a species, have figured it out all the other times.

To spell that out, I need to give another kind of honest retort, and I've done so in person.

What this question facetiously implies, is that civilization *has* figured out how to make all of *this* work. And the only evidence there is to pretend that is a reality is the fact that, at this moment, the machine is still running. The questioner presumes this means that it will continue to.

This writer knows that it will not.

But I'm not concerned at the moment with inevitability. I'm just looking around at the absolute tragedy that civilization has been for nearly every living being to encounter it. And I'm saying this as one of the systemically privileged ones.

In my 45 years, I have not figured this life out. I'm beyond broke, and equal parts broken. I take about a dozen medications, not for my health, but so I can continue functioning in this society. Decades of physical labor have plagued my body. I spent three years walking with a cane. I pummel my liver and kidneys with over-the-counter pain medications to get through 14-hour shifts of hard, physical labor. All the while, I'm a salaried professional: a chef and farm-to-table butcher, but I'm chronically overworked and underpaid.

I have daughters. I have the needs of getting to work and doing my job, weighed against the meager expectations of a life worth living. I make food for a living, yet can hardly afford to buy it. I'm always behind on rent, and face constant threats of eviction. Every month is a game of

shut off roulette with utility bills. I'm writing this after a short day of work, which was a nine-hour shift, in which I unloaded 1,500 pounds of grass-fed and grass-finished beef carcasses from a truck, by hand. I then spent the rest of the day turning that into meat cuts, which I also cannot afford.

I'm in constant pain. I have arthritis in my lower spine, and throughout my joints. By all means, I can't be doing what I am, but there is no other option: I just have to keep doing it, and, ultimately, it will most likely be what does me in.

I want everyone who has asked me this stupid question to sit down, look me in the eye, and tell me: how am I supposed to live in *this civilization*. Because I cannot. Again, I could have it infinitely worse, and most of the global population does. I just cannot bear the audacity of thinking that because a horror of a reality exists, that it has managed to find a semblance of the balance it has completely and utterly disrupted. Which it may have destroyed endemically.

It can't. And every single emperor and king before thought they held its mighty reigns just the same.

And where are they now?

They're gone. All of them. As all of us will be. But not all leave such a mighty imprint behind us.

I struggle with the cognitive dissonance that is paraded around as power. The indignation of "well, we're here aren't we?" being thrown about as though the conclusion is self-evident. As though any present holds for an eternity.

That's the unreliable narrator speaking: *well, it's here, isn't it?*

But that's the nature of the narrative. That's the thing about active abuse.

That is us, in our basements and other haunts, staring at any other detail than the horrors before us.

The reality is that privilege and power, within civilization, come at the cost and expense of literally everything and everyone else. In my 45 years, the lives of children born throughout the Middle East have come and gone, through a perpetual "war on terror." In the nations under the Imperial wrath, those children have spent their entire lives knowing to fear the clear skies, because that is when drones have the best conditions for their operators to open fire. The sound of their persistent hovering a perpetual terror.

As I write this, within the last twenty months, the first 27 pages of a report of murdered Palestinians slaughtered in clear view by Zionist pigs are all listed as age 0. Their entire brief moments lived under an onslaught of bombings, torture, torment, starvation, rape, and abuse.

And the world watches.

Even worse, this genocide has created a reality where its victims *can see us watching*. I have active lines going with at least a dozen starving Palestinians, and I cannot do enough for them. I want to be there. I want to fight each Zionist pig blocking aid convoys with my hands. Feel the weight of my fist rearrange

their facial structure. But I can't. Every avenue there is blocked.

If you want to be a part of the rape and murder squads of the IOF, free passes everywhere.

Meanwhile, students the world over are having their degrees revoked and face terrorism charges for opposing the most widely televised genocide in the history of civilization.

Every aspect of the worst parts of civilization's history: warfare, slavery, indentured servitude, class and caste divisions, misogynist and racist foundations, anti-queer, trans, or gay legislation:

the systemic abductions of children and redistribution through adoption and religious institutional abuse, the constant threat of clergy abuse, the systemic use of sexual abuse; the poverty, the deprivations, the rituals of domination and disembodiment of autonomy...

It goes on forever. Or, I should say, it's a list of maladies as old as civilization, but does not largely extend beyond that reach.

When that flippant nonsense pours out of conditioned lips, smacking of equal parts privilege and utter denial, it erases all of those core aspects of civilization, in one fell swoop.

How, I ask sincerely, have any of us survived this civilization?

Have we? And at what cost? At whose expense?

What more does this Earth have to give this flailing Empire? And why?

I'm bearing my scars, because I want you to acknowledge yours. We all have them.

It's never going to be a matter of comparison, and if we deflect to that through conditioning, then it's incumbent upon us to challenge that impulse. *It's the wrong question.*

We owe this civilization nothing, and it has taken more than it could ever possibly give.

I need you to see this.

I need you to feel this.

The question imposed is ritualistic abuse. It's that unreliable narrator, chomping at the bit. It's the jack-booted thug whispering in your ears: we have given you everything, and, what you are left to feel, they can take it from us too.

To understand this thing I call primal anarchy, I need you to shut that voice off. To try, at least. So we can look at this another way: what could it all have been?

Without civilization, what can life look like?

My mind tends towards pattern recognition.

In other parts of life, things like hunting and tracking, that is vital. It's a part of all of us, and that saturates throughout our entire being. We tend to focus on hyperspecializing within civilization, because to those in control, we are not beings; we are parts. How are we best suited to the industrialized apparatus. How do we fit in this artificial system? How best can we be used?

There's an innately vile thing at play here: seeing the world in terms of use-value.

The degree to which we broadly speak about and accept it is something profoundly disconnected. We are given the language of systemic predation and then it becomes all that we can see. Philosophers love this kind of thing. They can make careers out of it. Ethicists, all the same. All these elements of this civilization wasting perfectly fine air on trying to quantify and qualify *feelings*.

Look how easy this is: what they're doing is fucking stupid.

We can just say no. I strongly believe in not answering what I consider to be the wrong questions. They try to push things out into some kind of generalized, always-applicable mold, where such things don't really exist.

Language can do a lot for us, but it has innate limitations.

Prior to writing, and then amplified by print, verbalizations exist within an entire world of other impulses. Body language, inflection, surroundings; all of these things are what makes these words make sense, right up until civilizers needed methods for tracking economic exchanges. And then colonizers needed their realities to be transportable and transferrable.

So here we are, I'm writing in English, the most colonial of languages. You're probably reading it that way too, maybe not, but I'm not saying this to negate the reality that these are the

things we're left with. You can't separate the printed word from the world that created it. However, plenty of people have found their own ways within it. Played with words in ways that can speak to others, pull them back into those greater contexts. Even if they're read alone.

I'm a writer. I've dedicated myself to this craft, but I'm not being precious or judgmental about it. I'm not arguing about the good or bad of the tool, I'm simply using it.

Because so much of what needs to be said here exists beyond the limitations that the English language intentionally carried within it. These are values and realities that have been used against us.

All of this comes back to that unreliable narrator.

This has always been the point, even if its form is always changing. The printed word, on paper or on a screen, carries within it so many layers of mediation that it can dictate the terms of engagement. There's not really a way of talking about it that doesn't end up muddled. So I'll just get to my point: there are so many parts of our existence, as living beings, that are mired in a complexity that our language cannot handle.

In order to understand what I mean by primal anarchy; I need to invoke words like community. I need to invoke the senses. I need to be able to say things that are true, which is to say that sometimes they too will be ugly.

The simplicity of the printed word hinders even language. Context is stripped.

And context is what we need.

So, I'm going to use words that are flawed and frail in light of their realities. It's the nature of the beast.

When I say that I see things in patterns, it means that there can be a kind of narrow back-and-forth with the way civilization uses them. Primal anarchy is what I see as being the baseline of all human society; the life of nomadic hunter-gatherers.

The limitations with that language are pretty quickly obvious. Look at the wording: nomadic, meaning societies that don't settle into exact places for long periods of time. Hunter-gatherers: these are two means of food procurement. It's all extremely use-value. And in response, we remain stuck in the pit that civilization has dug itself: the scarcity mindset.

Above anything else, we are immediately looking at the brass tacks of the matter: how do they procure food? How do they relate to their environment?

There's a science to this, a number of them really. Most obvious is anthropology, the study of human societies. It's a colonial creation, much like any other physical or social science which seeks to categorize all life. The point, broadly speaking, is use-value. Colonial empires have long used anthropology to understand the societies they seek to conquer and enslave or to eradicate.

I'm not for any of those things, and a number of other anthropologists feel the same. Particularly Indigenous scholars who have sought to decolonize as much of it as they can. I have found useful things in the language and information in the same way that I have found my ways to try and use the written word against the Empire that fashioned it.

I bring this up because, well, I kind of have to. That's the lay of the land. I'm not being shy or avoidant about it. I don't want to get stuck here though. Consider this a drive-by shooting.

I say this because I am taking this de-contextualized term, nomadic hunter-gatherer, and adding the context back in. I'm not playing with use-value and I don't want to weigh societies against each other, like any social science inherently would demand.

The reality is that the term nomadic hunter-gatherer makes less sense out of context.

It's completely reductionist. The reality of a nomadic hunter-gatherer is etched into the land. It weaves into stories that place existence within the cosmos. There are stories, endless amounts of them, that are meant to spring life into the worlds in which people are hunting and gathering. And beyond that, life springs into the lives they are living.

These things don't cede easily. I don't use hunter-gatherer as a line for what societies are or are not connected to the land. That's not my point. The fact that these realities don't universally vanish as hierarchies and social power form indicates how powerful that primordial connection within us really is. Complexity remains, and within the tiered world of social power a large fraction of society will remain more engaged with the land. Technology can skew this; methods of mass production can skew this, but that is never fully clear-cut.

Civilization is always an imposition. That will look different within a society. Some of us need to be reminded and others will never forget this.

This does not stop civilization's narratives engage the world from a point of scarcity across the board. And I need that pushed aside. Because that way of seeing innately sees life as a number of problems to solve. And, frankly, were as equipped as any other species to find infinite ways of existing, which don't see everything as problems requiring solutions.

Look right at this thing; the way that human societies have been tiered; nomadic hunter-gatherers, sedentary hunter-gatherers, horticulturalists, slash-and-burn hunter-farmers, herders, pastoralists, subsistence farmers, plantation economies, industrial agriculturalists—including everything from ocean trawlers to factory farms to miles of pesticide-laden GMO croplands. Those are means of either procuring or producing an existence. And, for the most part, they're circling around how a surplus is created.

All of those terms get split into economic categories, but they are indicative of entire worlds and means by which any person interacts with their environment. From the forced re-direction of waterways for agriculture, they necessarily bring intensive changes in the environment.

Those realities could not be more disparate. And, even still, every single one of us, born into any of those societies and categories, was shaped by our mutual evolution as nomadic hunter-gatherers.

Hunting and gathering might define a society, from an economic point of view. But the reality is that both hunting and gathering are just a part of what makes that society. Past the scarcity mindset lies all the things that make a society a culture or community.

When you think about your friends, do you think first about what they do for a living, or do you have inside jokes and old stories that define your relationship? Unless you work together, what they do can be inconsequential. I've had lifelong friends involved in such a niche industry or study that I couldn't even tell you, in a single word, what their occupation is. And we're all the better for it.

Our work, our productivity, does not define us. Yet we live in a society where the vast majority of our day-to-day lives are spent completely submerged into these workplaces and occupations that speak to nothing of merit about who it is that we really are. How much are you biting your tongue at work? Do you tell some co-workers things you wouldn't tell others? Of course!

There's an easy anarchist argument laying within this one: fuck work. We all feel that, right? We all have those moments where we just absolutely have to justify the fear of homelessness or inability to afford food against the audacity of whatever shit your boss just said. These aren't the lives we're cut out for, and yet, still, even as the whole thing collapses, we have to go to work. We have to pay rent. We have to pay bills.

Do those things define you or do they hold you back? Would you do any of them the same way if you didn't have to pay rent and buy food?

I think these are really simple and basic questions, but that's just the thing, we push the rest of the world so far into this *otherness* that nothing looks familiar. This is the first book of mine where I've even said what my day job is. It's hugely irrelevant, until it isn't.

Now just extrapolate that.

If your work, which might be the most fundamental part of your life, does not define you, why would nomadic hunter-gatherers see either hunting or gathering as the defining trait in their own lives? It's ridiculous, and I need you to see it that way.

Hunting and gathering is not an occupation; it's a simplified and reduced means of understanding a relationship that a society has with the land. And now *that* is important.

To understand what it means to be born a nomadic hunter-gatherer, we need to remove the otherness implicit in the categorization. We have to understand that life is so much more

than the means of subsistence that we have, but the nature of that subsistence is what either makes or negates frameworks of power. I'm not saying it doesn't matter or does matter; I'm saying there's nuance here.

What makes a society? It's the people and their connections. You think hunter-gatherers don't have inside jokes or stories about sneaking up to fart on someone sleeping? Why wouldn't they?

The life of a hunter-gatherer is absolutely immersed in their connections, same as ours. The difference is that there is no artificial barrier between each individual and the contexts they exist within. There are no grocery stores. No rent. No landlords. No politicians. All these things that remove us from what it is that makes this civilization actually function, they simply don't have those.

As unthinkable as the lack of social power may be for us, the presence of it is impossible there.

This is where the unreliable narrator gets us into trouble, we end up looking at other societies like we're doing an autopsy of power: how did they manage this situation? We're working backwards and implying that the injustices and hierarchies we've been run through the ringer of are innate to who we are.

Here's the thing: they're not.

Hunting and gathering are engagements with the land.

Anyone can do them. Legality aside, that largely includes you and I. Within this society, they're regaled with laws and our own high-tech rituals. You end up with die-hard hunters dripping in products intended to make them stand out less within the land while being even more distant from it. There's that context again.

So, for a moment, forget about the laws. Forget about governments and regulations.

A hunter-gatherer exists in a world where food is free. Where rent doesn't exist. The society that stems from it centers focusing on how to enable and support each other, instead of prey upon them.

We see wild animals around us, all day, every day. They don't

need to be wolves or buffalo, there are birds, rats, bats, and insects. How much thought do you put to the fact that they continue to survive the world civilization has thrown at them? How often do you ask what it is that they eat, even when city planners and animal control have built institutions around suppressing and killing them?

We are not less animal than they are; we've just had it rammed into our minds that different rules apply for us.

Here comes that unreliable narrator, throwing all their worst-case scenarios at you; one of the fractional percentage of beings that ever had to work for a living to buy food and shelter. For any other being, at this moment or any other, civilization has always been their worst-case scenario. Even then, they have found ways to adapt, outlive and outlast all of this.

We have been told that we're exceptional; us, human beings. And then we're told that some of us are more exceptional than others. Others even more exceptional than that. Oddly enough, the ones calling themselves the most exceptional are the worst among us.

Looking at the patterns of human history, they're the ones being beheaded first when things fall apart.

All beings have their means of communication. They have their ways of interacting with each other and the world. Some have direct similarities to ours; namely, languages, but others don't. It is only the most detached societies to ever exist that have created these measures for intelligence and the like.

People closer to the land know these things. Human exceptionalism isn't some idea they've ever had to work past, it's unthinkable. The stories that bind and serve Indigenous peoples almost universally see the non-human world as vastly alive. That animals have their own societies and wants.

I'm struggling a bit here, and the reason why is that when you see these things, then they look as ridiculous as they really are. We are so thoroughly hammered with seeing the world as a use-value reality that there's nothing else left. That we have music and stories and cuisines is in defiance of this world; that's what we're told.

It's simply not true.

The hunter-gatherer within you knows this above all else, no matter how much we have the opposite rammed down our throats. Hunting and gathering might be things you feel as insurmountable skills, but those are the categories, not the realities.

Skills you can learn. Anyone can learn them.

Love, caring, compassion; these are traits that are unlearned. These are the things that domesticators attempt to tamp down. They come back into our lives in chains. Religions determine morality, States determine legality, and it trickles down from there. We become so removed from ourselves that we end up letting philosophers and politicians dictate where these things fit or don't.

We speak about freedom, but we're looking at it all wrong. We see it from a very libertarian perspective, which is to say extremely colonial. Freedom, here, means freedom to. When we speak of anarchy, the word itself is defined by absence: without government. Freedom, in this sense, means freedom from.

It's a sleight of hand, in a way. One is built around entitlement to others, the other is about being unbound. What makes a society is the ways in which we come together. We are, after all, social beings. And the nature of nomadic hunter-gatherer life is built around allowing a lot of flexibility.

We need it.

We are, after all, social beings that can get tired of each other too.

What does life look like without government?

How do we answer that question or envision a life in which the narratives governments have created are removed?

The answer lies with the ways in which children are raised.

“Judge a civilization by the way they raise their children,” or whatever Gandhi said. Well, I’m living proof that the measure here is dismal. But from there, it genuinely just gets worse. The bleakest dystopian realities are systemically unleashed upon children. Then every single institution exists to silence or dismiss them. As a society, the locus of power is built upon defending the abuser over the abused.

Once you see it that way, it becomes all you see: how power exists to protect the powerful.

And that’s it. Hang the unreliable narrator from the platform they are built upon.

Pretend, if for only a moment, that a society actually placed the needs of children above all else. Because that’s what we’re looking at. Not from a perspective of use-value; treating children well does not mean that having children is the sole imperative of everyone. There’s traps set everywhere here.

Treating children right doesn’t need a quantifier or qualifier.

Social sciences, philosophers; they love that kind of thing. They can build careers off of it. But who really cares? You can love without qualification. Or hate. Or just be completely ambivalent.

Remove the existential dilemmas forced into your mindset and allow things to just be.

Everyone is a child at some point.

Not every child is granted a life beyond that. That’s a harsh reality of this world, but that does not mean it needs to be detrimental or a reason to be dismissive of children. Children aren’t guaranteed a life, but the promise we carry is that they will be loved and respected.

The reason why is simple: reproduction is not a universal imperative. There are reasons to end a pregnancy, even in the best of times. Far more in the worst. If you stop seeing things at use-value, it’s about the love and care that a parent can give. There are plenty of herbs that can end a pregnancy, and humans have always known ways to prevent them. But accidents happen, whatever the context. Or situations can change.

I spoke of freedom from versus freedom to. This is the crux of anarchy, beyond any philosophy. A mother has freedom from repercussion for making a decision. And that decision could be exceptionally hard, unthinkable. Or it could be easy and straightforward. That’s a conversation that no one else ever has the right to judge or moralize upon. It’s not an existential crisis: it’s an extremely particular situation.

The horror here is that this doesn’t simply apply to hunter-gatherers. It applies always.

There is simply zero reason anyone ever has a right to weigh upon the decisions of a loved one, and it is the profound rupture of seeing a reproductive body as subject to rules of possession that burns through the realities of civilization.

We have to speak about these things in a way that those who granted themselves power and immunity from have dictated. That’s how absurd the law truly is. And yet we still find ourselves fighting for rights of self-determination within a system that holds freedom as its core value.

This is the level that we need to flush out, at every step. Civilization is a house of cards, and while it trembles mightily, those in power have done a lot of work in having you internalize the sentiment that the cards are for your protection.

They are absolutely not.

Reproduction is at the base of a use-value society. If they want an Empire, someone needs to build it. And what kind of tool are you to Empire if you feel any right to self-determination or freedom from repression? This applies to fiefdoms, kingdoms, capitalism and communism. The ability to dictate reproduction is about turning bodies into possessions. The more a civilization grows, the sooner that child becomes its property.

The examples here are miserably bleak, across the board.

I don't know how many I can personally entertain here, for the sake of my own sanity. But I think of the lives under chattel slavery, where women are routinely raped and then forced to bear those children, only to have them stolen to become slaves. I think of the women in the unthinkable position of trying to kill their newborns before they can be stolen. I think about it, and I see the depths of agony that exist, but I absolutely cannot imagine what that moment could feel like and the hauntings thrust upon a mother against every wish or will of her own making.

I think about the Indigenous children stolen by colonizers across the world. I think about those children being shipped off as slaves, born into systems of domination where everything a child should have is replaced with the mechanisms of brutality.

The point is not to make people. The point is to make subjects.

Industrial school programs, pogroms, concentration camps, plantations, makeshift mines and dirty chimneys, sent off to war, or sold to self-aggrandizing white parents as a cause. Again, the worst things that any civilization can do, it does to children.

Pull that string, continue looking at it. Eventually, you will see it everywhere, and the remnants within your own life. I refuse to qualify why children should be treated with love. But I can endlessly quantify this brute reality in which they fundamentally are not.

And that's where we are: forced, by circumstance, to start at the beginning and imagine what has been and what always could be.

It starts with children.

What I Call Primal Anarchy

At times laughing was crying's lie At times quarreling was a long goodbye At times running was a bit too slow At times tomorrow had no place to go John Trudell, "Old Memories"

I've spent my life tracing the scars of civilization.

Exhuming and examining them. The truth is that those scars feel like they can go on forever. But they don't. They end, and more importantly, they have a starting point.

I've given a lot of attention to them elsewhere; it is not my intent to restate all of it here. My book, *For Wildness and Anarchy*, is a start. The follow up, *Gathered Remains*, goes even deeper. This book, however, is largely focused on the gray area: the complexities, the narratives, the dead ends, the false promises, and the incongruencies. As such, my point here isn't to go through the intricacies of State formation and the rise of power.

My point here is the counterpoint to the narratives of civilization.

It's an intentional move not to combat each and every "yeah,

but...", it is to lay the ground work for what life has been and could be. If we're looking for a map out, here is the closest we will come. Not because we can or should simply replicate the lifeways of others, but because we can infer, learn and extrapolate.

The reality is that humans have survived civilizations. Always.

The nomadic hunter-gatherer lifeway has always been the backup option, because it is the primordial ooze that we come from. The collapse of empires is never a pleasant event. Civilizations are like vampires, they'll try to take everyone else down with them, kicking and screaming, repressing and oppressing.

That flail of a dying Empire is pure fascistic violence.

The gods of Empire demand sacrifice, and that means endemic warfare, both internal and external. What we are experiencing right now, in this unbearable reality, absolutely has a precedent. If you are going to survive it, it means you're going to have to be as adaptive as humanly possible. Add in the realities of catastrophic climate instability, and the need for adaptivity rises exponentially.

Decoupling our lives from civilization means that we need each other and we need our context. That context is and always will be rooted in the land. I know it sounds terrifying, but we've had our world sold to us in such a limited way, centered on maybe a dozen cash crops, and the point is to keep us stuck within that scarcity mindset because all we can think about is whether those things will be on the grocery store shelves or not.

Thanks to a global pandemic, we've seen the grounds shake.

All of us have now gotten a glimpse of the world devoid of *things*. For whatever reason, the absolutely apocalyptic rates of extinction can just pass by in the background. But when you go to the grocery store and all the milk, eggs, toilet paper, and meat are gone, we suddenly feel the Earth shaking. That's a change in the world that we've seen, and the grapple hold that was there prior, shaky as it was, is no longer there. The parachute is gone.

All we have seen since is that the State sees nothing as precious. It will cast you out and bury you.

In that horrid light, we've also seen the power of mutual aid. And that, dear reader, is what I call primal anarchy. Helping each other is in our blood.

Civilization rewards depravity. It needs cancerous minds to keep the unending pipeline of power rolling. They spit out their narratives with full bellies and a constant, ravenous hunger.

We saw this. We saw the fires. We saw the violence of the State unleashed in neighborhoods. And we saw mutual aid projects flourish. Every time, *every single time*, those in power sought to stomp it out.

When the pigs came, they trashed the distribution points. They destroyed food and water, clothing and shelter. They fined and arrested everyone who dared to offer food, water and shelter free. *At a moment when the world was running on empty, we just kept fucking going.*

No matter what they did, people kept pushing. Look at the force it took to try and suppress all of that, and *still* it wasn't enough to stop us.

Mutual aid is who we are. Caring is what we are.

What this shows draws a clear line between us and them, those in power and its guards.

We can be absolutely buried in skyrocketing prices, rent increases and cut backs. The pandemic saw the single greatest consolidation of power in human history, and that disparity is going nowhere on their watch. We've been beaten, gassed, overworked, and underpaid. Yet we're still trying.

Gather all the ingenuity it takes to figure out how to survive in these dystopian times and then, just for a second, imagine what you could do if you didn't need to go to a job, pay rent or buy food. We are capable of many things, and adaptation has always been a strong point, even to a fault.

What lies beneath is the drive to help each other. To have community.

The needs of power lie in crushing and redirecting those impulses at every single point, but we're still there. These parts of us are still here.

And in times of crisis, they take over.

We remain the perpetual middle finger to the masked up and armed-to-the-teeth thugs of State violence.

We're still here, motherfuckers.

Community.

The word means a lot to me, and I've fought to reclaim every bit of it. I imagine you cringing when you read it. It may be well past its time and there's probably a better word for it, but the clock is ticking, so bear with me.

I find myself thinking a lot about a quote from Kurt Vonnegut, about an interview he did with the social critic Susan Sontag. Vonnegut asked her about lessons learned from the Holocaust, which are absolutely fitting in these times. She responded that "10 percent of any population is cruel, no matter what, and 10 percent is merciful, no matter what, and the remaining 80 percent can be moved in either direction."

That's bleak, but it's hard to say it isn't realistic. And we have seen that in action already.

I'm not sure I agree with her, but my experiences check out. They are, obviously, well within civilization though.

Let's be generous, let's go with Sontag's assessment.

Nomadic hunter-gatherers live in bands.

Within those bands, you've got camps that are a mixture of families. I've spent a lot of time talking the numbers here, camps being an average of 15-80 people, at any given time, and bands being 500-1,000 or more. But I think some clarity is due, and I'm not the only one constantly reassessing those numbers as being low. They were all tallied within periods of violent contact with civilization, and the violence implicit in colonialism. I think, realistically, they can all be scaled up, but in the meantime, I'm comfortable enough with saying that the numbers matter less than the dynamics.

It is a testament to our primal anarchy that even in periods of colonization and the extensive force required in trying to maintain a life beyond it, all of these dynamics still worked, more or less.

I'm speaking in general here, but, as it turns out, the generalization is pretty accurate: the crux of nomadic hunter-gatherer life lies in conflict resolution. Therefore, conflict resolution is the most important thing to be teaching children.

Hunting and gathering are skills. Fishing and foraging, trapping and using all your senses: our minds were carved around these things. They can be learned easier than they can be unlearned.

Children imitate their parents, and they spend their childhood improving the skill set that it takes to fashion a life. There are far more aspects of life than just procuring food and procuring food is mixed in with all of those as well. If you've ever gone foraging with friends, there isn't anything to keep you from gossiping or heckling each other.

Laughing, arguing, playing, or being able to sit around a fire telling stories or saying nothing at all: that's the life that's been kept from us.

As infants, children are always held close and cared for extensively. Both parents and others help in raising them, other children too. And as they become children, they increasingly spend more time with each other. The older kids teaching the younger just the same as any adult, but they're all living in the same realm.

The Earth, in all regards, provides.

But that doesn't mean that everything is wonderful and beautiful.

The ingenuity of this way of existing is that everyone learns the abilities it takes to procure a living within the land. The scarcity may come more with some seasons, but can be nonexistent in others. What that means is that people come together because they want to. We are, after all, social animals.

What underlies this way of life is the exact opposite of the world as we know it: it accepts and confronts conflict as something that can arise, and as something that can be addressed.

If you aren't getting along with people at one camp, you can go to another.

If you need time alone, you are fully equipped to make that happen.

People move. Camps move. It serves an ecological function of not decimating any one area, but also serves the social and psychological function of having momentum. What children are taught, above everything else, is how to deal with conflict.

By Sontag's measure, that means that the 10 percent who tend towards cruelty are in a society that doesn't reward that behavior and doesn't build or empower them. It doesn't create an infrastructure that allows them to push their cruelty onto others, and there's nothing they hold that others aren't equally capable of crafting.

To put it bluntly: they can be assholes, but they can't systemically reinforce that.

We all know people who can be assholes. And we can all be assholes too.

I don't say that to say that 10 percent of people are intolerable; everyone is intolerable to some people and better suited to others. It doesn't matter how close to the land your life is, some people just don't get along.

And here's the thing: that is totally fine.

I've hacked at the word *civilization* enough, but *civility*, that auspicious gem tied to the word, is a whole other beast.

Anarcho-primitivist writer John Zerzan called it *niceism*, and I like that too. When you see civilization for what it is, using civility as a basis for supposedly good and acceptable behavior is pretty goddamn ridiculous. It's the colonizer crying foul play that a stone was thrown at his tank. Genocide, ethnocide, and ecocide; those things are all good and fair. But using harsh language or standing your ground, now that's uncouth.

There are a million directions to go with that line of thought, none are less valid. But I'm bringing this up because I'm more concerned with the way civility has utterly decimated concepts of community. I'm looking pretty directly at the concepts of democracy and the niceism it rides in upon.

It's worth getting a little bit further in the weeds here.

A lot of anarchists have been fine about postulating their theories and ideologies under the guise of nice terms, like direct democracy. Let the people have their say, and the like. Even worse, voice for the voiceless and all that sanctimonious, savior crap.

The reality is that the world civilization has built is inherently untenable. It genuinely does not matter what form of government exists in title, they're all predicated on a method of organization and decimation that inevitably eats the ground it stands upon.

Anarchists and other radicals want to find a way to make that society work. Socialists have tried extremely hard, and have shown things can always be accelerated when it comes to decimation.

Civilization is fucked, all the way down.

The way that we relate, as humans, as social animals, as communities, means that the frameworks all need to shift back to the baseline. And that baseline always will be the land, not the systems of oppression and hierarchical efficiency.

I'm not trying to bury the lede here, I am trying to prepare you to envision the world differently. Collapse is the reality created, fostered and worsened *by civilization*. The reason we need to divest from it should be immensely and imminently apparent, at least once you're capable of seeing it.

What my hope is, is that you can start to hear, see and feel that without immediately falling into the defense mechanisms your oppressors have planted into your head. And, make no mistake, there are many. I don't pretend to be beyond them. I write for myself, as much as anyone, and I'm being pretty open about the fact that decades of fighting civilization haven't uprooted all the narratives and patterns in my head.

I feel like I've been more prepared for civilization's collapse than I had for the reality of its prolonged demise. I can't take it. I get lost far more often in thinking about ending my own life versus the dreams and hopes I used to feel so much more of life without civilization. I'm not saying I was naïve. Hopeful, surely, but I've had a lifelong struggle with fate.

The reality is that these things take time.

Rebuilding community, undoing civilization; the lot of it.

But that doesn't mean there won't be crucial breaking points, and that is what we're seeing right now, the world over.

The alarms have been ringing for centuries now.

The writing is being pressure washed off the walls daily.

The clock is ticking towards its inevitable irrelevance, faster and faster.

What we need is the honesty that this kind of band life demands. Of all things, that might be what we're the farthest from. Domestication requires domesticity. Sedentism requires stagnancy. Production requires reproducibility.

What all civilization implies is that there is a law to the land, and there is a saturation of power dripping throughout it. If you're renting an apartment, you don't choose your neighbors. Yet you've all signed leases and you all are maybe a handful of paychecks from being able to stay put or have the luxury of movement. And yes, there's some sincere irony in recognizing that movement—the core of how our societies have always worked—has become a luxury for the rich and a death sentence for the poor.

We've got laws telling us how to act, and even that is scaled.

You can get fined for dumping trash in a private dumpster, while the two richest scumbags on Earth are able to launch failing rockets where ever they land and the government pays them for it. Extrapolate any of these things that the "law and order" or "liberty and democracy" crowds call for and they're really all this abysmal.

Accountability is a consequence. A racist, sexist, homophobic, hetero-normative, authoritarian system imposes it by rank and measure. It's a punishment. And we have to sit here and watch the most powerful people and organizations simply slide through it all.

Prisons fill up on charges that money could have avoided, entirely down the line. The benefit of the doubt is in the hands of power. A cops' word will always hold weight, even when cell phone videos or body cams clearly show different.

Imprisonment, detention, drafts; these have always been the tool of Empire. Slavery by any other name. The absolute underbelly of the civility and democracy we're told to uphold as values.

We have a phrase for this: carceral punishment.

And this is the world that we are pushing children into. Schools vary in funding, and they go from looking like prisons to corporate campuses. We are hammering these things into children from the start. And, in all reality, in the US, school might be more deadly than prison.

So, we're taught to ignore the thing that is *constantly* being waved in our faces: be civil, or else.

Freedom is expensive, but freedom-to is what those in power have. *Everything* can *always* be taken from you in a matter of seconds.

We don't need to guess how a dystopian reality like that plays out, we're just forced to play nice within it. Call it what it is and you're a terrorist. And, if this is your first time, welcome to the club.

All of these things are meant to create the idea of community as something that is created by force, circumstance and absolutely in need of perpetual defense. This is the exact opposite of the communities that are tethered to the land, straight down the lines that civility has drawn.

The reality that is taught, above all else, to children in grounded communities is the opposite of civility. The lead-based paint, white-coated fence has two sides. If you are scared of reprisal, but can always buy or cheat your way out of it, and then have that behavior rewarded and institutionalized. The only thing civility teaches is the long story-short version of "know your place, boy."

Movement is the crux of all of this.

It provides a reset; either for individuals or for bands, or whatever else.

If the world your community sets in place tells you that bad things can happen, it means that you can learn how to react *when they do*. I want to drive that point home: *when they do*. Because they will. It's absurd to think bad things don't happen. That's civility just white-washing the reflection you see in a riot pigs' helmet.

What we are taught is civility is that *we need to avoid conflict*. Even to the extent that we will have our own lives and the lives

of people we love utterly decimated, starved out and destroyed. *Avoiding conflict* is a tactical strategy based on consequence. But the rules of those in power proclaim absolute definitions. That's why we have something as ridiculous as The Supreme Court.

The application of legality is predicated on power and control. If there is an actual logic to them, that is it, and nothing more. Don't rock the boat. Don't bite the hand that feeds you, even if you did all the work and it's grabbing your throat.

What we are really teaching through civility is a scaled internalization of a fear of power.

You're taught to stand in line, and for some, that's never enough. For others, that's all they need.

This matters because domestication is a process meant to break us in eight billion different ways. It's meant to make you more isolated. It's meant to rob you of empathy and sympathy. Those things are a gift from evolution: a process that doesn't suit civilization.

What each of us is reduced to is the internalization of all these tiered terrors and confines within our own lives. This is why you have privileges in society. This is why white people can't be trusted within white supremacist systems: the point is to keep people from being able to see beyond their own experiences unless they are forced to or subject to something so far beyond the pale that there is no turning back from. And that's just the truth of it.

Anyone who wants to say otherwise is just distracting the issues. We're all reduced to so little that we are fighting for the pieces of ourselves we struggle to maintain. No matter how irrational that is, we're seeing from a place of tiered retributions and recriminations. That's the investment civility makes within us, and we absolutely start hammering this into children.

When we fall back on democracy, it's because we think the beast has internal logic and that it can be appealed to. That's not reality.

The thing we need to be able to see and to understand is that if we take away the mechanisms of civilization, how much continuity does a community actually need? If this entire means of social organization is doomed to failure, then it means a radical

change needs to happen in the way we interact with each other.

I am just as aware as anyone that the dominant narrative is that when the grip loosens at all, it's a straight collapse into some *Lord of the Flies* reality. But that was literally written by a fascist. That we got to this point of existence, as a species, speaks endlessly to the fact that this isn't actually what happens, even though those in power will try. And we have all seen this unfold in real time.

Bite the hand that feeds.

Rock the boats.

What we need at this moment, beyond everything, is the ability to confront our reality with honesty and empathy. Those bastard things they've tried to keep suppressed still exist.

What we know and have seen endlessly, is that when you center your communities in the land, you learn to listen to it. You learn to read it. And we have been nothing if not enormously adaptive before. I would argue our ability to continue existing within this nightmare is evidence of that.

The core of civility is a lie: that placing order over honesty will save you.

The truth that unfolds beyond civilization is that community is important, but that reality is malleable. We need to see and understand it from an ecological perspective. The definitions and barriers we've imposed are entirely concocted ones.

We can unlearn them.

We find ourselves back at the primary inquiry here: what is a community?

I could try and spell it out a thousand times, and I have elsewhere, but the truth is that we need to allow the dissolution of ourselves on infinite levels with very, very little time. But, as it always has been, the timing is a bit out of our hands and this plane is quickly heading towards the second tower.

What we need to learn is what hunter-gatherers teach their children: how do you deal with conflict?

Because when we start there, the entire ground shifts. You can start to see all the fissures and breaks in the narratives. The incongruities are glowing with a toxic yellow hue.

When the machines of global consumption cease, as they surely will, what does community look like?

That's the trick of the whole democracy angle. It only comes up in societies where every decision can have planetary or regional consequence. When you've put your entire livelihood in

the hands of priests and technicians, then you're not rooted to the Earth: you're chained to the system. The hand that feeds, or whatever.

When you remove those systems, what is it that really needs to be decided on such grandiose levels? Why does there need to be consensus for so many things when everyone can just move on, if that's what they're inclined to do.

It's the unreliable narrator. You're thinking about who is taking the lead when your group of people is at a cross roads, and, ostensibly, the consequences of being wrong are horrifying. True to form, they exist within societies where those kinds of consequences *do* exist.

Our need is to divest from that approach to reality. Take the weight of the produced world off your back. See the world as giving, even though civilization has utterly ravaged it, and the reaping has not yet caught up with what has been sewn.

The world, as we've known it, is flailing.

We need to take the narratives back.

We need to take our Earth back.

Intermission: Becoming the Unreliable Narrator, or, My Life as a Community

What I'm going to say is impossible, but I'm going to do it anyways, at least this once more.

TRIGGER WARNING: The following section will discuss abuse, particularly childhood sexual trauma. If you aren't able to read that, I fully understand, skip the italicized text.

I'm back in Sam's basement.

Truth be told, I'm a million places, all at once.

Trauma reshaped me on a molecular level. To reiterate, resiliency is an incredible thing, but it is never a compliment. And the child I was, was very fucking resilient.

What I faced was systemic. Planned, articulated, and persistent. It was never far away. I endured what Sam had doled out on me, but he was far from being alone. I have only learned through life to accept more readily just how widespread and endemic the abuse children face really is.

Children, in civilization, are never to be believed. Throughout large periods of time, they are one of the most readily disposable resources. Not in the sense of the impossible decisions a mother might make out of love, but in the literal sense of being replaceable assets.

It begins with agriculture, the need for farm hands. I've worked with plenty of Amish and Mennonite farmers, and it's a dip back into a very European past. Children aren't just playing and imitating the acts of the adults for fun amongst each other, they're critical parts of the infrastructure that agrarian societies take.

It's like anything else in civilization; once you see it, you see it everywhere.

My birth mother never looked at me; my adoptive parents made a cause of me and my brother. We were a sign of their generosity, and that was enough to keep us from being seen as assets. We weren't field hands, but we were indoctrinated into a larger circle of predation, of which Zionism—though that word was never spoken—was central to all of it.

Being adopted meant being born at a deficit. But even that goal line was capable of moving.

You are told that you have been spared by graciousness. You've been blessed. I've yet to meet another adoptee who this was genuinely true for, but I know some are out there. I've been a step-parent, and I have both known and felt that innate urge to protect kids regardless of what their DNA is.

We've always done this: raised children as a community. Parenting can be great, but it's not always. Everyone needs a break sometimes. There may be some ecological reason underscoring that, but it doesn't really matter. It takes a village to raise a child, or whatever, and yet it actually does.

The more hands a child is held within, the more love and comfort they can feel. In an uncertain world, that actually is a blessing.

Like most adoptees, this is not the experience I had.

What I had was tiered guilt and obligation. I was being told I was blessed, so if I rocked that boat, the punishments were severe. If I spoke up, it was all punishment. Hell, it was punishment anyways.

I could see the disgust on my adoptive fathers' face when we were at Sam's. He knew full well what was going on. He was connected to it. But I know as a parent all the tells of an abused child, a sexually abused one in particular.

A family dinner at Sam's was unequivocally followed by periods of being grounded. Not for anything specific, but no doubt, some form of acting out. Less in intensity, and more in trying to feel a sense of ownership in that house and a comfort with making jokes or whatever I was doing to distract from what had actually happened there.

My father recognized it as drawing attention, which I was inadvertently doing. He kept sending me there, my adoptive mother too, and had Sam been the only threat, there would have been no denying that he was.

I lived a perpetual punishment. I started running away when I was ten, and the cycles of threats increased.

This family had money, not from Sam's side, but it was there. It meant that the abuse could be buried more clearly before the world. I had stuff. I could be called spoiled to justify attempts at being seen. I was seeing psychiatrists and when they started piecing things together, I no longer saw them. And it's not like they were calling Child Protective Services about it.

That deficit hung on like a shadow. It was inescapable.

We've all heard of survivor's guilt, and I struggled with it before my brother died. It was only worse after.

Mike and I had endured much of the same reality, but our reactions were different. And, as such, our punishments were different. So much energy went into trying to keep us at each others' throats.

And I won't pass on the fact that Mike could be extremely violent, because he certainly could be. It was like seeing someone pull the pin on a grenade and then throw it at you. That's what would happen. All the violence, all the chaos; it had to come from Mike, not Sam, not anyone else.

It turns out that children are extremely easy to manipulate. And

that's a truth I've only ever come upon the hardest ways possible. The worlds we imagine, as children, are absolutely subject to change and they can feel drawn out forever.

Systemic trauma, with bouts of acute sexual violence, broke me. It broke Mike too, but it broke me differently.

This is how I became the unreliable narrator in my own life.

My brain fragmented.

I have Dissociative Identity Disorder, DID as shorthand. It was formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder, but that's kind of misleading. It's a spectrum, as most of these things are. But it is severe, and I am on the extreme end of it. The way that it is explained, the term used the most is that a person with DID is considered a System. For clearly motivated reasons, I prefer to think of it as a community.

Mine is exceptionally large. There are alters, which are more fully formed personas, with their own experiences and motivations, and parts, which are more like fragments of severe abuse, broken off and forever hiding within the community. Nearly all parts are fragments, and, as such, that's who remains stuck in Sam's basement and all of the other places the abuse occurred.

That also included the synagogue.

I say that DID is basically the same stop on the DSM as schizophrenia, but gets off the other side. Unlike schizophrenia, it cannot be medicated. Also, it is typically rooted in internal fragmentation, whereas schizophrenia is more external. Schizophrenia is defined by its delirium, which I'm not saying with judgement, but DID is not prone to delusions.

What DID has done is to fragment me, infinitely. Those parts that are scared children? They're protected and hidden. The reality they experienced is all that they know. I can feel them. I can see them sometimes too. Memories pass on like a moving postcard, an adaptation meant to provide continuity. The point of the community, after all, was to not be caught or seen.

For someone of my size, I walk extremely lightly. And I taught myself, as a child, to breathe extremely shallowly. I taught myself how to exist less.

DID is a reprogramming of the mind. It takes place typically from severe trauma, and a lot of imagination for how to survive the unimaginable. It roots between the ages of 5 and 8, so it's a matter of neuroplasticity. It's not an articulated plan, it's a response. As such, alters and parts can forgo any of the typical archetypes that psychology uses.

Who "I" am became a vessel for survival, predicated on appearing as a single individual.

Triggers, however, can change that. I do not have the intent of laying out my community here, for a number of reasons. Primarily though, those details don't matter. My community is different than yours or anyone else with DID. But what it really is, is an exaggeration of trauma responses.

Anyone can have alters and parts. Trauma is largely what puts them there, but undoubtedly, most of us have our parts buried within us, with a broad span of what we may or may not know of them. When someone is triggered, those parts—stuck in their acute terror—are called forward. It may mean being unable to tell which reality we are actively in, but the terror is what overrides anything else.

I'm in the basement. And I'm not.

My community has a large degree of co-consciousness, which means that whoever "I" am, broadly speaking, is probably a dozen or more high functioning alters that work mostly well together. But it's not always that nice. I can always hear arguments going on in my head, but they're removed enough that I can't make them out. I have alters that don't sleep. I have raging insomnia, and I know that when this physical body is incapacitated by sleep, a lot of alters and parts can just run rampant without being able to have executive function over my body.

This shit is really weird. And I know that.

It's taken a lot for me to be able to talk about it, and more for me to say that I would be willing to or that I should. But I feel the need to. Because I owe it to you, and I owe it to all of them.

The others within me come in many forms. Some speak. Others don't need to. There are many kinds of communication and plenty of alters that don't work well with others. There's all kinds of genders in there, and some absolutely without gender or form that I could possibly describe. I was a heavy reader as a child, and I read a lot of science fiction and felt an affinity with animals. What can exist within my community is pretty unbound, but I am unequivocally extremely queer and non-binary.

I know that my body presents otherwise, but the complexity of it is something that needs acceptance, not elaboration. I don't owe anyone an autopsy.

But what I know is that my ability to fragment must have scared Mike.

And I fucking feel misery about that.

I fear that we endured abuse and then, later, he was talking to someone else, because, very literally, he was. I can't expand on that, not because I don't want to, but because "I" was not there. I was not the original, nor even an earlier alter. I came later, inheriting an evolving role within this body, within our life.

I can see it when those parts or alters come forwards. They are like any other survivors, and the struggle will always rely on believing them. When I first became self-aware, meaning that the usual response of splitting or creating alters was no longer serving, the whole community fell apart. I became acutely aware that I was not one person, but each part and alter—who is also me—felt they were the only ones too.

It was absolute chaos.

I have a saint of a therapist who I've spent countless hours with. She knows my community better than I do. She is, very literally, why I am still here.

What happened was that I became absolutely aware of the unreliable narrator, and it's methods because maladaptive. I crashed. I burned. I fought within myself. I had to learn to accept that the reality I was suddenly feeling was always there.

But the incongruencies of the life I was told I had lived were suddenly staring down at the indisputable realities of what had actually happened. In hindsight, it was always there, but I was trained not to see it.

And what I could not argue with is the children.

What we say in terms of DID is that, at any given time, someone or some group is fronting.

That means that the person you are speaking with is whoever has the floor at that moment.

It seems like the experience of smaller communities is far different from my own. The switches are clearer, the identities of each alter is more separate in their differences. For the most part, only a tiny handful of my alters can or even would consider fronting, but if you didn't know, you probably couldn't tell the difference unless something extreme was happening.

And, with the children, it's always the extreme.

I suffer from chronic pain, and I've mentioned it already. But how things happen within this body can be worsened by switches. How I carry myself, how I walk, or speak, all of these things are subject to significant change. Some alters have different eye colors. Some don't blink. Drugging was a part of my abuse, and some have partial to full paralysis because of it.

There is no disputing it, what you are seeing is different.

I mention the non-delusional nature of DID because when a child is pulled forward by a trigger, it's not a 45 year old thinking they're a child, but a child in this vastly different body. The way it feels, looks, moves, and everything is absolutely foreign to them, and, likewise, it just adds to the confusion of suddenly being in both their reality and this other present too.

The terror they live in is so devastatingly true.

And I have to parent them. The community has to parent them. We have to embrace them and the brute realities they are enduring, and it is our job to protect them.

Mike was barely two years older than I was.

I cannot imagine how it was for him to see these different iterations of me, in these moments and after, and be able to reconcile them. Because I don't think Mike ever forgot. He had his parts, sure enough. But his reality was singular, and mine was not.

When he died, I felt like a huge piece of me died with him. The experiences that we shared were only capable of being acknowledged by each other. The gaslighting we faced was so buried in that

deficit we were born into and then bargained for. It was not our choice or our making, but we handled it very differently.

The reason he turned to drugs is the reason I didn't. That familiarity and loss of control, it was simply too much for me, and it's a feeling I never wanted. I understand why he went further into it, and it was ultimately what killed him.

I can understand that. But I think about what he saw in me and how I could change, and I have only come to fear how alone that must

have made him. That part of me that died with him, I can't imagine how many times he felt that on his end before.

It's a struggle I will take to the grave.

And that presence in the face of horror, it's something I will never hide again.

I think the world is finally forced to reconcile the brutality that Zionists are capable of.

It's no mistake, Zionists have been an unbelievable force within this modernized world. And the ugly truth is that they got here by subverting a tragedy of genocide as a means to usurp Jewish identity, and bury it as a colonial power.

The IOF spends its efforts on targeting anti-Zionist Jews, like myself, not going after Nazis and white supremacists. I think this is hard to understand for many. Nazis, historically, hate Jews. Yeah, duh. However, supremacists of all stripes are fine with ethnonationalist states. If all the Jews are removed and they can serve a socio-political function, all the better.

That's an alliance that works for fascists. And fascists certainly come in all flavors.

Theodore Herzl was the founder of Zionism. This was leading up to the First World War, but, frankly, his idea of a Jewish culture and homeland was hardly rooted in his devout Judaism. That's because Judaism is a religion and culture defined by diaspora.

Judaism, in the ways I can relate to it, comes about as being a people enslaved and exiled. That's a defining moment for Jewish history and identity. It's why Yiddish culture took over. It was a ghetto society, and one that has always had a pretty blunt nihilistic sense. There's a rhythm to it.

And then when Zionists created a Jewish ethnostate, this is why they erased Yiddish as the national language, and reverted to Hebrew.

Zionism is the opposite of a diaspora. It's the opposite of that core of Jewish identity. Judaism was defined by exile and that's the way the story goes. It's not a missionary religion. So how does it become the tool of a settler-colonial Empire? Simple, it adapts Christian Apocalypticism.

What lies at the center of Zionism is what made Israel become a global power. For the Christian Apocalypse to begin, the Bible (not the Torah), states that the Jews must occupy Palestine. It's simply a step in the chain of events that exists far beyond Jewish lore.

But Herzl and the like wanted a Jewish state. What more powerful friend and financier could you possibly find than Christianity? That's where this mess really kicks up a notch. And Britain, feeling the pressure of exiled Jewish populations in the anti-Semitic build up towards World War II, needed a place to offload those migrant populations.

Zionism suited that all too well. The British would come to push that off on the Soviets and the US, with the US increasingly taking the initiative. But it was the speed with which the World Wars accelerated the use of engines and gas-powered machines that would forever shift the dynamics of what a Jewish state could mean.

The Holocaust became the justification for the Zionist cause.

Geopolitics, however, are what made it so that the Jewish state would be an absolute stronghold for the West having a proxy colony in the middle of the Arabian oil fields. And with that, the justifications overrode every single thing.

In 1948, everything changed. The military support for the occupation of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state dropped in an unceasing devastation that we see to this day.

It's called The Nakba. It's Arabic for "the catastrophe," but it's the beginning of the intense seizure, occupation and ethnic cleansing of Palestine, parts of Syria and Jordan. Forced starvation, perpetual forced relocation; settlers were coming to full houses and taking them over with the strength of the military, forcing families in refugee camps in their own country, where bombs are dropping as I type this.

I can't move past this.

This is a part of me that existed. I was raised and trafficked within a Zionist cult.

I say this with so much shame, but up until I was around 10-11, I had been raised to be a part of the war machine. I wanted to move to Israel when I turned 18, and join the IOF. I thought, as I had been trained to believe, that they were fighting Nazis. And once I saw that this wasn't the case, there was no turning back.

I had spent so much of my life burying myself in the shame for believing the dogma and indoctrination that I had. I was a child, yes, true. But so are all of the starving and murdered children that the IOF is killing one-by-one with bombs and snipers.

I turned to that shame because that is what I was meant to do. It was my fault. It was my obligation to this deficit. I owed my grandfather everything, because he survived. I wasn't his progeny, but I was still his prey. And it just built from there.

My indoctrination kept me from being able to see or feel anything other than the need to maintain face in light of extreme incongruences in my life and the narratives I was given.

I have fought the IOF and the sheer existence of the settler-colony that is Israel for my entire teenage and adult life because, whether I wanted to acknowledge it or not, I knew what horrors Zionists were capable of. I had lived the depravity and the horrors.

I can't just say that it is intergenerational trauma, because none of me is willing to sit with that.

But that's the reality of it, despite everything, despite running away and fighting with my adoptive family, I still refused to give any ground for myself to stand on. And there's a fucking lot of us.

What I'm getting at here is this: my example has its extremes, but those extremes are just exaggerations of what so many of us have suffered. Statistically speaking, it's beyond grim how many of us have these kinds of stories and I wouldn't dare to weigh them against each other.

And yet, still, we bear the curse of survival.

It is unthinkable that these things can happen, and yet they do, a billion times over. The degree and depravity that power makes possible is just so absolutely fucking sickening. And then the accountability that is tiered into our lives as punishment unfolds again.

Those of us who bear the most violence from civilization are the ones who face the most repercussions from striking back at the hand that strangles us.

I have no words for this. I don't.

I'm standing in Sam's basement, and I'm seeing these huddled masses, hiding in every corner imaginable, and they're all fucking children. And they're also me.

Extrapolate that into the sun and back, it goes on infinitely. And that's still not enough.

They are capable of gnawing inside your head and having you

carry every goddamn burden that brings us and this planet to the brink of decimation that we all face. For so many of us, that's all we've ever seen of it.

I want them to hurt.

I need them to hurt.

I pray every day to unformed gods and crows that each IOF pig will feel the pain of it. That they'll suffer. That every ICE agent, every Department of Homeland Security, all the militaries and cops of world will hurt.

That want for revenge is mine. And inshallah, may the victims of Zionism have it.

But it's still me in this basement. And it's still you in yours.

What this world needs, above all else, is that we see each other, that we see ourselves. That we see these insidious parasites that those in power have snuck into our brains. That we start here. That we see where we are and what is unfolding around us.

And that this is the truth we fight from.

Regardless of consequence.

I'm not done. Not quite yet. There are parts of me given the floor, and they aren't finished speaking.

What I see when these Zionist IOF pigs and brutally violent settlers smile while they commit unthinkable violence was mirrored on my uncle's face. He was the oldest of Sam's sons. My adoptive father the youngest. They've both guilty as sin, but it's Jimmy's twisted smile that echoes throughout me the loudest.

They weren't alone.

The degree of reckoning that has begun in overturning the endemic sexual abuse in the Catholic church has yet to happen for Judaism. Jews make up something like 1% of the population in the US, so it's nothing like the social entity that the Catholic church is, even though the Zionist beast gets unending funding. But, needless to say, the abuse happens all of the same.

And, for me, it was in the room behind where the Torahs were kept in synagogue. Behind the outstretched arms of the organs, behind the stage where weekly services happen. I haven't really allowed myself to go back there, and I've tried the hardest not to let that wander out. It's too much. It was then. It is now.

But Jimmy's smile bleeds into the unrepentant smirk of the Cantor. I don't remember his name, but I know he died decades ago. I felt a silent relief. The way the two of them merge is almost flawless, even if each look was in a different place and time.

They were the same.

Jimmy played on the bonding that Sam had unleashed on me, he was no doubt familiar with it himself. And Jimmy, if you're reading this somehow, I hope it fucking burns you alive, and I invite you to show up on my doorstep any day or time. I will gladly end this.

But there's something else that melds in between.

It's the sheer disgust that Jimmy and Sam had when I was a teenage punk and not just a kid anymore. The whole side of the family was conservative and reactionary, as any Zionist would be. I leaned into it. I told everyone that I was gay, that I had to leave family events to do something they'd find disgusting.

And the look on their fucking faces remains etched into my fucking soul.

This is what I'm getting at. This is what I cannot let go.

These men, these pieces of human excrement that raped me, they could not for a second handle the idea of men enjoying each other's sexuality. They raped me for one reason and it's the reason rape happens down the fucking line: it's about power. It's about humiliation.

I was made into a subject, owing my existence, servitude and silence to a reality they had nominally avoided, directly and indirectly, but they had used it as a weapon.

I hear the words “never again” and I see them falling from the mouths’ of these vicious colonizers as they unleash pure hell upon others. And they do it for power. That is it.

These are the same scumbags who have rabbis publicly debate the morality of raping Arabs. There are untold cases of Palestinian prisoners and detainees being raped to death by the IOF. Men, women, children: it doesn’t matter. Everything is already justified and literally anything done to rob humanity from the people they are subjugating is justified.

Down the line, when you hear the threats and see the actions of Zionist pigs, rape is universally a first thought.

This is the colonizers’ weaponry, and they have absolutely no hesitation on imploring it.

Hell, they’ll deny it and admit to it in the same breath. They expect that you will do nothing, and when you say a single word about it, they have the might of “anti-Semitism” to bring down the full weight of the system. Not on Nazis, not on white supremacists; but from the would-be possessed objects of their wrath.

I feel the hand upon the back of my neck. I see the blood going down the drain.

I need them to hurt, and I want to be the one to bring it to them.

I’m not a child anymore. I wouldn’t stand for it before, and I certainly won’t now.

Jimmy, come find me, you fucking coward.

The least I can do is to end their world. Because I cannot stand it happening once, and it’s happening millions and billions of times over again.

This is what civilization is.

This is what they’ve built and why they’ve built it.

An Empire of brutality and cruelty; solely to fellate those who wield its power momentarily.

I need it all to burn.

Call it What You Will

I’m impatient to end the story of the artificial beast with human entrails.

Fredy Perlman, Against His-Story, Against Leviathan

So who’s that ghost knocking at my door?

What’s that shape climbing over my wall?

Tears for Fears, The Tipping Point

Time has never once healed a wound.

Inevitability is a different story.

At some point, as all Empires prior have learned, time has rendered their means of wounding null and void. It will for this civilization too. But the ghosts have always been knocking on the door. Maybe they always will be.

The ghosts are hungry. If not for revenge, then for recognition. The refusal to acknowledge the horrors of civilization only

swells their appetite. They will always be heard, in the end. One way or another.

Forgiveness is a demand of power, on behalf of their victims. And its heaviness is never felt the same by all. That's the point. The purpose is to place the burden of the abuser upon their victims. It falls on each of us to decide whether or not we remain human in light of it all.

It's not fair. And it never will be.

The point is that we need to understand conflict resolution, just the same as nomadic hunter-gatherers taught their children. Just as any other society tied to the land teaches their children.

The nature of the law is that conflict is not ours to acknowledge or engage. It's a matter of the State, and taking it into your own hands will always be breaking some law or another. Those who have been granted the freedoms of money and power need not worry. They don't play by the same rules.

The idea that we can appeal to governments and their laws through morality implies a reality in which some sense of fairness might exist. Even more ridiculously, that they might be flatly applicable to all peoples or entities. They don't. They never have, and they never will.

What happens next demands that we pull the blinders off our eyes and see that the dictates of our reality are not subject to systems of control and demand.

What every civilization discovers inevitably is that infinite consumption is impossible.

So, what would children be taught?

One thing is levity. In a world where power doesn't exist and its machines aren't ravaging everything imaginable, consequences and weight shift drastically. Feel your feelings, yes, but take a moment. Is every fight endemic? Is every disagreement a crossroads?

We're emotional animals, just like any other. We are allowed to feel a full range of emotions and we're allowed to not be defined or redefined by those moments. We can always allow those motions to change the trajectories of other people's lives, but that's just the thing: that's not how things have to go.

We return to movement. The role it plays in keeping literally everything from being stagnant.

If you cannot be around this place or this person right now, how freeing is it to just not be? The world is full of places to go where one person or a handful of other people are not.

You can always just go.

Blow off steam, never come back; there are plenty of options, go and take your time with them. This is probably the single most important thing we have never been allowed to understand, but it's also really just that simple.

Healing, however, is one of the most crucial things to any society. And it's painful to say that. As much as we have the language surrounding self-care as being important, we've given absolutely no room for communal healing.

What our religions and politics dictate is that healing comes through salvation. It comes through legislation and its dictates. Whatever needs to happen, happens through the State or its institutions.

What that means is that all matters are placed back on you.

It means that conflict is always meant to be mediated by the State and its apparatuses.

This is not conflict resolution; it's crime and punishment. You are never allowed to think and feel your own feelings, much less act on them. The law will define who has done wrong and what penance they will do. They reinforce their own systemic power, and remove your agency methodically.

Not only does this keep wrong-doing from being addressed, it removes our ability to confront conflict and potentially diffuse or resolve it. Everything is escalated, but then it is out of our hands. It's meant to disempower you, and empower the system. It's deferred responsibility.

Where, in this world, is healing?

Where are we meant to resolve anything if we can confront nothing?

Because there's something really crucial here, and it's that nomadic hunter-gatherers, by and large, teach their children that violence is a resort of consequence. It exists. It's a feeling and emotion that we are capable of.

But hunter-gatherer life creates conditions where everyone

knows full well how to kill. It's not the militaristic bravissimo that we've been indoctrinated with, yet it's extremely real regardless. If you are regularly hunting and butchering other living beings, you know weak points. You know how to hurt.

Nomadic hunter-gatherer societies don't shy away from this. They lean into it.

Conflict resolution is how you are able to mitigate situations so that wanton harm doesn't tear everything apart. And because of that, it doesn't. We've seen that even within Indigenous societies even when they are being subjected to the eradication and destruction that civilization brings with it.

Healing rituals offer another way of seeing and engaging the world that gives the opportunity to start anew or to shed mounting frustrations. They are intimate and powerful. They remove the space that we have between us in ways that English cannot possibly encompass.

There are other ways, and the children learn this. We can all be assholes, sometimes. Don't empower the things that can tear us apart.

That's one direction.

There is another one.

Life can be brutal. Things happen to any of us, and any of us can break.

The reality is that violence is something that can be avoided, but never eradicated. And for good reason, if you don't think a hunt isn't violence, then you've never been a part of it. Violence exists in this world.

And it exists flatly: it's not just a matter of good or evil.

When you live without the State, then the mitigating factor in life is removed. That's a good thing, because the law and its orderlies have only ever increased systemic violence, not reduced it. What that means is a dip into the murkiness.

Try as anyone might to influence better patterns of co-existence, there will always be some exception. This is something that echoed harrowingly as the colonizers expanded their insatiable thirst across the world. The impacts have been nothing short of cataclysmic.

What we've had taken from us, from the time we are children, is our ability to confront and resolve conflict. That means all the ideal and less ideal ways this can happen. But the further this society descends into endemic fascism, the further those methods drift away from us.

What we need is healing.

That can look like so many things. And so many of them are beautiful.

I want you to have this. I want you to feel and see what the land and its relatives have to say and show us. There genuinely is magic in this world, and for all the brutality that civilization has unleashed, the sun still shines and the ocean still rings an endless mystery.

We've seen that finding the land and finding community are words that we use for healing, and that's for good reason. But we find them delivered in an amputated marketability that's meant to keep the blinders on when you are engaging them.

The truth is that the land is hurting.

The pain, the loss, the agony; these are all tearing it apart at the seams.

Our pain and the pain of the land are one.

What I want is for you to allow yourself to feel it. To remove the thousand barriers placed between us and that nagging sense in your head that sees each bit as another intersection of "yeah, but..."

This civilization will die, inevitably, of its own excesses. That is happening now.

But that is not enough.

What we need is to confront this conflict head on. Because every minute this beast stumbles forward, it leaves behind such a literal trail of bloodshed and agony. So much of that is children, and so much of it always has been.

I can't stomach it anymore. I can't.

I have looked into the abyss so often and I find myself looking for any way out of this unbearable shit.

We need healing, yes, but the wounds are being inflicted on an industrial level.

What is community? I have a feeling I know, but even that

is off. Because if I felt it all, what would happen then? At a certain point, we have to understand that community is a direction. It's a long-term goal. Getting there means we have a ton to unlearn and to relearn.

It will take generations, but to find the path, we have to make the divestment and start to take the steps. We'll know when we get there, and, to be honest, it probably won't be us that find it.

But the question bleeds.

A new question stands in its place: what does it mean to fall in love with a world that is viciously and meticulously being raped, tortured and killed?

I have no words for this. I asked the question and the darkness that descends with it weighs on me heavier than the weight of all the scarred and scared children within this body.

I have seen the terror this civilization demands. I can bear no more.

What we need is not words, but feeling.

I need you to feel this.

And I'm standing in the bog, I'm pounding my chest and crying, yelling at Fischer to stay with me.

I'm holding my cousin Dora, still so young and hurting, and I'm asking her to put the shotgun down.

I'm in the car with my friend's kid, begging her to know that I will fight for her. For all of her trans friends, including their partner who killed themselves three weeks later.

I'm looking at Mike, just a fucking kid and also not, and I'm a fucking mess.

I am looking at myself, and I am looking at you.

I feel the fucking rage and anger and frustration and loss, and I cannot bear it.

And I am telling myself, all of them, and all of you, that our healing demands that we fucking fight back. Every step they take, we need to cut the ground out from beneath them.

There is no reasoning left with this monster.

The ghosts are pounding now, and I feel my body shaking.

I see all the children, discarded, abused, bombed out and starving. It's all I can see right now, and they're everything and everywhere.

The healing we need demands the violence necessary to confront this reality, and to say "never again" with full chests and heavy hearts, and really fucking mean it.

I used to dream of freedom. I used to dream of liberation.

I still do.

But I'm older now. Maybe wiser, maybe more jaded. I no longer dream for myself. I struggle with even holding hope, no matter what younger iterations of myself have fought for.

I dream now for my daughters. I dream for the starving children, torn into concentration camps and detention centers. I dream that we, as humans, will do what we've always done, and outlive the beast. Whatever hope I lack for myself, I hold for that, against all reason.

I want that.

What I hold for myself is different. I feel a pain that these words will never encompass. And I writhe with an agony that knows no bounds.

I cannot show restraint for this civilization for one more minute. And I won't.

What I need to say, what it is I need you to feel, is that we can't hold back the violence against this civilization anymore.

We need to see it burn.

We need to be the fires.

What civilization did, stretching back into the origins of domestication, was different.

It rewarded cruelty. It took nightmares and gave them forms.

It birthed institutions of barbarity.

Civilization gave the tools of abuse, and coerced a social order which granted power to abusers.

Every single step of the way, the worst things imaginable were empowered and encouraged.

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Ghosts, a chapter from the book, *What is to be Undone*, is a plea to look into our own traumas and horrors to understand the depths and depravity that civilization instills into our own lives.

We are indoctrinated with narratives that serve those in power to maintain a system of colonial and ecological terror. As that system unleashes its fascistic might, it is vital that each of us identify and divest from this nightmare.

This world needs us to fight.

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Kevin Tucker
The Ghosts Knocking At My Door
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