

## 9. House Arrest

Being among people, as thoughtless as they are, can be better than being by yourself. Children have a natural instinct for friendly exploration and resilience in threatening situations. Society had been severely set back by a few pedophiles, rapists, and serial murderers, who've made parents unreasonably afraid to send kids out. Alienation is a weapon used against individuals; keeps them vulnerable and weak. Alienation results from driving your own car, laboring in your own cubicle, living in your own home, and manifesting materialism of a typical consumer, never sharing domicile, food, resources, sporting equipment, tools or workshop. "Life is all about *me*, my needs, not society's welfare. Let *me* get cozy first, then feed starving masses," if any survive in the meantime. That's how market economies work; waste resources letting a few falsely proud individuals try to convince themselves they are prosperous and sheltered, while the rest directly suffer on account of it, and, after all is said and done, the cozy become tormented by guilt and miss most of what makes life livable, a lose/lose scenario for all mankind. Current paradigm has a way of summoning ever present demons out of otherwise placid souls. Seems far more efficient if each person just learns to endure mild distress and deprivation and makes contact. Besides, then you can grumble all the more about what poor treatment you've received, saddle sores, social snubs, sunburn.

Nirvana lies beyond fasting, serving and waiting. If people based decisions strictly on reason and utility, practically everything popular would disappear. A loaf of day-old bread costs just a buck but will keep you alive for a week. A Starskins' latte has no nutritional value, lasts a few minutes, and is priced 3 times as much, about as much as a single mood pill. When will people quit taking pills to run away from problems, just face them, fix them, and refuse to be victimized? They're not running away from anything but headlong into trouble. Clearly, some can't do without, are too addicted and screwed up. Making a series of wrong choices, choosing death over life, spirals downward into an abyss from which you can't escape. Poets do this by unduly challenging their readers, losing a few each stanza. Doing things for glory not money, you wind up broken and unable to pay your nut. Taxes are the sole expense you can't get around. You can cut costs, starve and freeze yourself, walk instead of drive, but you can't evade revenuers.

As with most utilities, a whole third of his monthly cell bill was supposedly fees and surcharges that they probably never turn in. Working for tax money forces you out among people whether or not you want to. Fees they collect unfairly expose quiet homeowners to pointless peril.

Al sat unshaven awaiting something to happen in his sweatsuit, uniform of the unemployed year round, except in Summer, bathing suit and tee shirt. His intense efforts to make something happen hadn't. Had never read *Crime and Punishment*, too busy helping others, but cruel insensitivity toward him seemed like a new type of prison, one that cost him every cent, costs the state nothing, and effectively kept him isolated. "Left on his own, he feels immobile." Nobody called or emailed.

Marley sang, "No chains around my feet/But I'm not free/ I am bound here in captivity." Bitter? Ambrose Bierce made a business of it. He'd had it with spam, enduring that sudden hope raised by a half dozen unread emails only to be cruelly dashed by idiotic ads for products he'd never buy out of spite. Not only were spammers untrustworthy, they represented everything he hated about grasping, philistine capitalism. Most miserable about it is that spamming requires no effort, so it never ends until you change your email address, install filters, notify all legitimate past contacts, and then it resumes anyway after you use Internet for a few weeks while searching for an opportunity among thousands of phony recruitment entries that never pan out. Internet invades privacy through phishing and spoofing, too, respectively, securing personal information about you and using your innocent curiosity to direct you where you might purchase something lamely aligned to your interests. Nothing good comes from lurking and stalking information.

Sometimes he'd put a chain between his feet and go to that concrete jungle downtown just so he wouldn't feel so alienated. Throngs of holiday shoppers teaming in close quarters magnify lonesome longing, lead people to develop tactics and mental defenses. Some city dwellers simply decamp to countryside or waterfront. Flâneurs, unlike aloof voyeurs, impose themselves in crowded arcades or malls or platforms or rail cars to force touching, as if in a mosh pit, a movable labyrinth of unwitting familiars. Usually they're those unfortunates who hang near busy cafes just to get a sense of kinship with fellow humans, something for which others seldom give them a chance. By thus defying confusion and disease and divesting themselves of their individuality, they find sanctuary, as if a remedy for alienation and sin, cleanse themselves in a sea of intimate indifference. He doubted they appreciated

mathematics of Brownian motion, chaos theory, fractal geometry, Levy flights or Lorenz attractors, all of which can be used to predict outcomes of such motion. But it beats urban angst, perhaps.

Trouble with all this modern alienation amidst seven billion others is you're likely to get angry and suspicious over nothing at all, mislead yourself, raise question, "Where were you when I was burned and broken?" Unless criminally insane or a deranged spammer, people don't generally mean to be cruel, they just can't be bothered. You are either in their way en route to their destination or you're standing nicely by the sidelines out of harm's way. To have your own dreams that conflict with theirs is to create enemies. The ultimate aim should be to create win-win scenarios, find ways so all personal goals compliment each other, work cooperatively. You should reciprocate with those who make your life easier, but you have to recognize what that means. A convenience that enslaves is no convenience.

He intuited ideas, offered observations, and presented perspectives. People can use them or toss them. Had nothing much else to do besides look for work, ride his bike, and unhinge gatekeepers, at which he excelled. Why not combine all 3? If you don't want embittered people, you need to strive toward social justice; not having done so, you're just going to have to put up with the results, whether an annoying novel or a bloody rebellion. How do you stay sane in an insane World? Standing apart isolates you from a world so you don't have to prostitute your values, but then do you really experience anything? With some source of income, this lifestyle wouldn't be so bad; most people actually prefer turtle behavior: hide at home, neck tucked in, rather than endure exposure to hateful masses. Many can readily identify with this feeling. Many are cowards.

For many positions involving paperwork and teamwork, all that should qualify a candidate is a clear understanding of these; he possessed all prerequisite skills, so why wasn't anyone calling? Interviews never went well. Said the wrong things. Tripped over landmines presupposed to weed out undesirables. Bad when self is so nonconformist and out of step with mainstream. Was it his fault he remained loyal to one company for entire second half his career? How could he know latest recruitment protocols? Why couldn't he have a better self? Why not just omit self-damning details? Not as if he was an ex-con, he was just too old for the age discrimination and demographically based decisions of human resource henchmen. But he couldn't be anything other than himself no matter how untouchable. Society nails such people to a cross.

Had to examine why he didn't want to do anything. He always worked hard, pursued projects with enthusiasm, was no slacker. He could certainly be called a wordsmith, but didn't relish mental processes that convert particulars from one form to the next. This is like porting software from one platform to another, a band-aid, a futile stopgap, what's forced upon you in the absence of better system architecture. What he really wanted to do was detoxify, take in nothing new, undo harm, writhe out of all the poison he had absorbed over a lifetime writing the other way. All society offers, though, were ways to act that got you checked off as acceptable on a recruiter's checklist: right clothing, shoes, tie, ways to behave, what to say, all phony outward appearances. Naked ambition is something companies can milk.

With cosmetic dentistry, discipline, hard work, intensive psychotherapy, martial arts training, plastic surgery, and the right club memberships he could be a board director or a network anchor or somebody. Was this something worth attaining given these costs? Plenty of openings for journalists. Nobody's interested, what with this administration's campaign against news media and judicial incarceration of reporters for not revealing their sources. Thought of this vocation too late. Could've done well before the bottom fell out, before people stopped reading newspapers. News doesn't mean much to an aging, retired population; no issues affect a lifestyle outside of business, relatively few a fixed but guaranteed income. Agony stories were someone else's problem. News was for huggers, newcomers, nouveau riche, or suckers.

Instead he gazed out upon the flowering crab he planted so many years before outside window where he now worked, home base. Wasn't just a mature crabapple but an uncommon species, a deep magenta bloom and red tinged, dark green leaves, sort of how bile, blood, sweat and tears loosely swirled appear. He knew all this when he bought and planted it, but had since forgotten. Only by comparing it with others in bloom around town 20 years later did he begin to recall. Its bloom, vibrant and attractive for several days, now seemed worn and piqued, drained of vitality having served its purpose, giving way to new leaves that needed to turn on for themselves. Children of pioneers take up the yoke to become those vessels of practical wisdom for which all promoters of progress (parents, scientists, and teachers) yearn, create new yokes of their own. Sex was for procreation, to be sure, but why was it so darned entertaining? Weren't there already too many mouths to feed? Better the turnoffs of blemishes, exhaustion, overexposure, scars, tattoos, warts, and wizened actuality steer fornicators towards zero

population growth. Yet news media marvels at first time parents over 50 years old, validating selfish desires for young careers and putting off offspring until financially convenient, later buying a Harley-Davidson to assuage a middle-age urge. What of a child's needs? What of parents with enough energy to take them everywhere? Parents, unfortunately, are entitled to be lame and uncaring if that's what they want; progeny have no unalienable rights to love. Gibbon hit a bulls-eye, "I can derive from my ancestors neither glory nor shame." You must make your own game. There's zero tolerance for false pride or self-pity. Your clan's accomplishments and calamities are not yours. Never bring up your ancestors. What did *you* do?

Getting worried there wouldn't be anything at all that generates revenue, worse, he was losing his edge, getting behind on softwares for electronic sweatshops, and losing all desire to keep up. Quitters don't realize that someone has to support them. Extrapolated to its extreme, one person has to do everything, and how long do you think that can last? He considered taking classes, transferring to a more lucrative field, but questioned not only hottest opportunities but likelihood of landing one even with additional certifications. What was wrong with degrees he already held? Had to redouble efforts, maybe market himself differently. Weeks flashed by with alarming repetition until an entire year was lost.

At a job fair watched recruiters review his resume. Glanced at it. Didn't absorb it. When nothing leaps off page, they get bored and listless. People don't want to be challenged. All they want is to pigeonhole you based on as few words as they know, having never held such a post. Can't respect those who blame woes on job seekers themselves, as if their inability to find employment had nothing at all to do with lack of jobs. After reading an article, "Get up and Go: Don't let excuses get in the way of your job search", he decided that recruiters ought to be the first before a firing squad come the revolution. Of all occupations, recruiters have to be the densest, dullest and laziest of all. They wouldn't know talent if it clamped its jaws on a buttock. They ignore the best and brightest. Instead they focus on idiotic, talky types like themselves, notice insipid nonsense while not noticing you. It's like a club or party, more like dating, nothing at all like serious business. What are they looking for? Someone to gossip with around a water cooler? Persistence doesn't guarantee entrance. If you heed career placement and resume service advice you'll simply chase your tail and waste your entire life away. Human Resources are staffed with xenophobics admitting relatives and barring strangers. If you're not born

corporate and raised in its culture specifically to meet future demands, you'd better forget ever getting hired. The future for corporations is precarious. Civilization is doomed.

After holding a position at the pinnacle of his profession, he compiled a killer resume reviewed and approved by state experts. Contacted everyone he ever knew who could do some good. Made an A-list of references. Posted resumes at every temporary help agency and all such sites. Sent 500 emails and hundreds of customized letters. Went in the back door of all top area corporations. Attended every cattle call that promised positions. Cold called every potential employer. Read books and websites on what to do and did it all. Spent 6 hours of every weekday on searches. Followed up on every lead. Expanded contacts by volunteering both in clubs and as a director of public affairs television. Served on advocacy boards. He had heard that potential employers who checked his references got glowing reports. Still nothing! Nobody could make a decision. Cash was too tight. Human Resource statistics compilers say recruiters complain they receive up 1,000 applications for the few openings they're trying to fill. As a middle-aged technical professional with an incredible background who'd work for food, he was overqualified for fast food joints. Short of falsifying documents and lying in interviews, couldn't contrive anything else to do while living on retirement savings. Then again, he'd never been unemployed before. Maybe they should hold continuing education classes on what to do when you're sacked besides becoming a criminal.

Yet he wasn't in the least depressed. The entire Northeast region was; its fastest growing occupational sector was charitable begging. Welcome to Next Century America, belly of the beast, a wounded animal that cannot abide its own progress. When that happens, economy goes soft, times grow lean. Small businesses fail at a ratio of about 100:1. No, no longer a carrot dangling, but a phony promise of a carrot. Not satisfied to stand by and wait for opportunities, entrepreneurs, even those with smarts and where-withal, have a tough time developing industries that might serve needs. Takes investment to realize a vision. Moving South might help if he didn't have elderly relatives who relied on him. In an electronic world in his profession, you wouldn't think moving at all would be necessary.

He gradually grew convinced the main cause was national policy. Before elections incumbent politicians compare current unemployment claims with those at some previous date then take credit for creating x many million new jobs, when what's really

going on is that unemployed have exhausted their benefits and gone off roles, while they've done nothing at all to rally economy and stuck to unexamined policies. Contacted his senator, who explained that the long awaited job bill was in Congressional limbo because it wasn't popular with Republican President. Joined as an activist to overthrow this regime, successfully on a local basis but unsuccessfully nationwide. Too bad he had no influence over residents of Ohio; perhaps then domestic policies would have been addressed.

Republican trickle never reached him, but downsizing, offshoring, outsourcing, and other forms of corporate malfeasance surely had, big time. Bonose's claim that, "Corporations aren't the enemy," is debatable. They're experts at seduction. They can afford to be nice to exceptional people because they are exceptional, an isolated case, not the majority, and thus make a shining example of their good will at low cost for exceptional publicity. Corporations should be agents for good, since they are already so well organized, consensus personified. Since they're instead solely devoted to profit, it's easy to resent them when they don't meet community and employee needs. You can't sneak inside and realign from within. Their charitable and social policies are preset from above. This might be society's ultimate evil. Moyers came out and called it a "full-scale class war". Their dirty little secrets are far beyond dirty and little. What people needed was a policy metamorphosis, not pabulum and platitudes. Meanwhile he'd continue to work on his *excuses*, such as exposing 1-dimensional conservative bigots who lump everyone unemployed into a dustbin of laziness as if it were their own fault. Why not supply a vision that motivates prosperity?

Locating in a small state had no perceived advantages: small pool of qualified applicants, stingy public subsidies, too few resources for businesses to draw upon, too small a tax base to support them, tough to concentrate wealth away from the many into a few hands. In a small state, what little industry they can attract is crowded alongside residences. If you could afford to escape industry, a villa in Tuscany would be choice. About the only way to accomplish something similar here would be building a mansion on a hill overlooking a bay. Small states are good places to retire to or live off a trust fund. Small states parlay their quaintness into attractions for tourists, health spas, nursing homes and stuff retirees seek out. If you'd rather do something other than change bedpans or sling burgers, you'd better relocate. You'd think that a more diverse base of industries would serve a state's interests, rather than focusing on just a few or giving up altogether. In small states they tap

pent up wealth, drain it like an abscess. This might work for awhile, but adds nothing of value. Touring by bike was frowned upon. Once was nearly jailed for camping on a beach, tidal property well away from domiciles, with no risk of owners complaints, he believed. Instead, constable confined him and his companions into Shoreham Hotel at unplanned expense and incarcerated their bikes, like a “bike-napper”, held for ransom until overnight bill was paid. Sounds more like extortion than law enforcement, unneeded ordinances that chambers of commerce lobby for whether or not all rooms are already booked to capacity. They were lucky to scrape up enough, but had to go hungry. Next day, small minded authorities sent them off island on small ferry into a Nor’easter, where he was almost washed overboard to drown. Better death than to let three youths spend a night unmolested under stars, then get up to spend the same amount on breakfasts anyway. Memories of mistreatment color all future behaviors, including giving up bicycling.

After 4 decades of contributing to society, here he was, sitting at home doing nothing when there were great deeds to be accomplished. Are people so evil that nobody ever considers what good they could be doing? Terrorists are not an enemy if they are the enemy of your enemies, boards of directors who find ways to curtail headcount, incorporate in Bermuda, and screw other nations so often as to make them irate at you, who always fought on their behalf and wished them no ill. You can’t win a global war on terror. You can only remove fear, hunger, subservience and things that make poor people rightly unite against merciless rule.

Loners explode in fury because they can, not because they want to extort for something specific, rather over fears and misconceptions. Media outlets thrive on their overt acts; makes for good 6:00 o’clock footage. Governments take advantage to prove they’re indispensable and tax hikes are necessary. If citizens ever doubt it, rumors of wars circulate. What are they doing to establish neutrality and keep you *out* of wars? Nothing at all. In fact, they are busy arming the enemy they plan to send you to fight. You will go gladly to preserve a way of life you can’t even participate in. Those opportunities they dangle are only for their own nephews and sons and suckers to drool over.

Some researchers claim that owning stuff has supplanted spirituality for many Americans. What about shopping networks that chip away at meager savings, foist useless junk on the poor, pick their pockets? Manufacturers they represent ought to fail, since they’re the ones without any notion of what quality means, and not enough sense to concentrate on worthwhile products that

fill real needs. Need work? Adopt uniformity for things where standards are important. Assemble coalitions, fight evil, make friends. Develop a World economy and stable currency. Ensure nobody goes hungry. Establish dependable global distribution channels and rapid disaster response teams. Manufacture stuff wherever you expect to distribute so it can't be tainted with drugs or terror weapons; soft drink bottlers already proved satellite plants works far better than trying to ship over long distances. Quit taxing the poor, reduce burden on middle class, swell share paid by highly profitable businesses and privileged individuals. Relieve debt. Stop this sell out of America. Take advantage of relative peace to do some good. This *war on terror* shouldn't even compare to daily police routines. It's blown out of proportion so somebody can make a buck off it.

Reading Havayard School of Business fantasies made him sore, but that's what managers do, follow the model du jour. In the process, they've gutted (trepanned?) all mentality out of business, and were turning America into a banana republic. Advertising, journalism, publicity, tech pubs, and all such stuff he had done for his entire career weren't valued anymore. What's happening among businesses is frightening. American companies can't compete with foreign labor rates due to an artificially pegged Chinese Yuan and other state suppressed currencies. To stay afloat, they are eliminating everyone who doesn't contribute directly to making products. To make this strategy work, they are closing any operation in which they don't hold either Number 1 or 2 marketplace position. They hear and obey advice that they can't be profitable being Number 3, even though the famous CEO who espoused this theory later quietly recanted; this was the same martinet who ritualistically dumped company's bottom 10% because it demoralizes good workers while it cowers remaining 90%. By closing down, there are fewer beans to count, less material to buy, no new products to parade, nothing left to develop. Bye-bye accountants, advertising departments, buyers, engineers, marketing managers, production workers, researchers—along with the future of American manufacturing. When all productive enterprises disappear, kiss the rest good-bye. Government bureaucracy, insurance, medicine, and service industries can't exist and directly depend on agriculture, manufacturing and mining. When products they are now making fail to sell, there'll be nobody to redevelop anew. They'll just buy out startups that have any success, if there are any, or trick inventors out of their innovations.

Writing was a good way to bluster loudly without disturbing the peace, practically purge demons without tremendous pain, and pray someday someone might actually listen. It masks awkwardness in-person, hides blemishes, and sells a false sense of logic. You can write at home naked as a jaybird, engaged in fellatio, stoned on any of scores of substances. Can't expect anyone to pay you for your own therapy. You can waste time with cubes of space, divination, esoteric interpretations, meditation, tarot reading, tree of life, and whatever you think makes you special and unique. Composing songs, creating artwork, writing prose are all something sad to do when your heart is broken. There was a glut of traditionally published literature, much more of it self-published. Clearly businesses didn't value wordsmiths. The current administration advances such policies. Any poser who doesn't read, flatly refused to bail out American Steel, sends a fine sign to youth: Achievements, communities, ideas, individuals, and materials are garbage. Only investment matters, but not so much as to protect lowly participants against stock fraud. Discriminates against those looking only to serve. After extinguishing all practical sources of value, won't need an educated populace. Next they'll be burning books, closing universities, and rounding up educators.

The truth is to be cherished. Arrogance, excuses, lies, omissions, prevarication are all ugly and to be eschewed. He'd witnessed the same in business. People who can't do anything, cheat and lie to stay, cost others their livelihoods, do terrible things, make a horrible mess, then are finally let loose to do the same somewhere else, only worse, since they appear to have qualifications. They rise to the level of their incompetence and soar beyond. This president leapt into the highest office, instead of proceeding through decent stages, through a crooked sibling state governor who rigged election there. Money can buy power, an aphrodisiac so strong it's worth billions. Those who desire it so dearly must feel terribly impotent.

Why don't things ever change? Men imagine they perfect something, then don't mess with it. Why reinvent the wheel? Furniture hasn't changed much in hundreds of years. Bodies haven't changed much, so why change furniture? Badly designed furniture can be injurious to blood vessels. The same economic theories have endured since the 1800's. Someone needs to counter classical economies of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus and their Darwinian *eat or be eaten* mentality so popular today. Malthus once joked about how, "Capitalists can't gather without their talk turning towards collusion against the public," as true today as then.

Smith never could disentangle the diamond-water paradox: Water is essential to life but worth far less than diamonds, which have no intrinsic value other than their rarity and the sanguine fluids spilled to extract them from far below ground. Possessing what no one else does feeds ego, and thus is disproportionately valued. Smith was no romantic, only thought utilitarian thoughts, that sources of value represented an appropriate division of labor. At least these pragmatists endorsed sharing profits with workers, marginally better than outright indenture. Dickens, who spent time in a workhouse, denounced their “dismal science of economics” and gave ethics a major boost. 200 years after the overthrow of tyranny and subsequent theories on what to replace it with, today’s power brokers begin to think they can put this genie back in its bottle, revert to some pre-democratic system, despots or tribal chiefs. Even the slightest whiff of freedom is all people need to get hooked on democracy. Yet traffic in slaves persists to this day, forced prostitution included. When owners begrudge a minimum wage paycheck, it’s no different than complaining over keeping slaves alive on as little as possible, a frequent topic of discussion in America’s South only 150 years ago. Wheels, by the way, have been successfully reinvented on countless occasions.

Capitalism can’t work for the common good. So what’s the alternative? Even Drucker the Money Printer vilified it in favor of self-regulating market economies, a type of medieval throwback. There must be something that already works that slipped through the cracks long ago, before the pendulum swung too far right. Those who argue *benevolent monarchies* are elitists expecting a king to grant them favors, or they might be waiting in line for succession themselves. They spout ridiculous aphorisms, like, “Goals are dreams with expiration dates.” You can have short and long term goals, lifelong goals, goals that span generations. Some monasteries have been around for a millennium without changing their mission in the slightest. The masses are conscripted as cannon fodder serving the will of a few privileged. Worse than trickle-up. Socialism offers no incentives; why work toward a target if there’s no personal reward? Conversely, extreme privateering deprives majority of any rewards. They were 2 express trains passing in opposite directions, both to the wrong destinations, when you want to get off somewhere in between. People don’t mind common good as long as they are real comfy themselves, first and foremost. Politicians who promise anything else are idiots or liars. “No new taxes!” Yeah, right. A healthy economy needs a mechanism where earning anything too far above normal results in diminishing returns.

What's wrong with spending one's life at a good company that serves a worthwhile purpose? Not a good survival strategy! This means narrowing your perspective, specializing. You become the precise instrument for a particular situation, but then have no marketable skills. Perspectives are what people offer instead of fairness; they want you to have some of theirs but don't need to hear yours. Conquering emperors, Mongol hoards, Nazi madmen, and similarly afflicted megalomaniacs cared nothing for perspectives of those they vanquished then enslaved. You become dependent upon a company, its jargon and policies, and lose market currency. Especially when they hire a vice president like Curley Cubeson. Curly owned and presided over a business until it was bought out. Gave every appearance of dynamic worth; even served a stint in Iraqi War, an imaginary hero. Yet surface isn't substance. Below a slick, spray paint thin skin was a stupid, paint-by-numbers amateur way out of that league. Fair haired boys fool their bosses, but he could see into shallow emptiness beneath, like finding an empty wallet.

Military people have few doubts, but they're often totally wrong. You can't judge merit of anything new or question orders when it comes to killing enemies. Such training doesn't translate well to civilian enterprises where those skills are paramount. There are plenty of Curly Cues around who need to be closely managed if not redirected into more suitable occupations, like homeland security or law enforcement. Boards of directors treasure them, though, since they admire command and decisiveness, even when bad decisions damage them and doing nothing at all would have been better. But when your company president is a lunkhead like Bub Grillos, who spent more time building a retirement home and hanging at country club than minding the store, there's nobody to countermand the destructive force of a cube like Curly, an officer but no gentleman. It's disheartening to think these clowns continue on their regal rampage with nobody to reign them in.

They reminded him of a pair of college professors with which he took one class each. Having to sit through those initial elective lectures, he immediately dropped both courses. Naturally, professors asked why, and he made a credible excuse, so as to be spared retaliation. He still needed to take classes in their departments. But his real grounds were the same; didn't have time to kill, no, not with his mission, master everything. Coincidentally, both classes involved history, then of intense interests to him. One professor was way too wrapped up in military, as if killing were the only way to understand cultural differences. You'd think a 20th Century

survey might cover arts, economics, exploration, invention, medicine. World War I, while a significant event, hardly merits mention by comparison, except for the influenza pandemic it spread. What of the years 1901–1915 and fantastic La Belle Epoque? No telling what's rattling around in some professor's heads, sabers, perhaps. Then there was an essay assignment in the style of Shakespeare. Since the bard didn't write essays, this was speculatively futile. Besides, what point was there to imitate Elizabethan English badly? Time killers. Should have instead asked students to use a clear expository style or show some appreciation for the fullness of life's experience as represented by the Bard. Couldn't wait to bail out of those burning airships.

Historians aren't at all to be trusted anyway. Only another way to sanitize what actually happened, clean up a hero's real stupidity. Historian Morrison's neighbor's dog barked so much during work hours Sam shot it. Who hasn't been driven to nearly that extreme not only with dogs but luxury car alarms owners ignore, and other unconscionably thoughtless intrusions upon sleep or work? Better are honest journals of what's happening now. But how do you determine they're honest? Just sounding about right isn't enough. Only an act or tract that results in author's severest persecution, done knowing what revenge it would bring, would merit being considered to have any integrity at all. Think "The Declaration of Independence" as a role model.

Belle Epoque was Europe's height of artistic, moral and scientific achievement. It produced the flourishes of much admired Art Nouveau, a sensibility with replaced regimented straight lines with the sinuosity of nature's tendrils, flowing hair, and womanly forms in hues of dragonfly wings and forests at dusk. This blending of artifice and nature brought beloved bucolia amidst often impersonal urbanity, somehow defused conflict, mended moods, softened edges, and therefore was widely copied. Bicycles and horses predominated as personal transportation. But did all this harmony across borders lead to the hostilities of two world wars? After everything was destroyed, the artistic spark was suppressed and cities were again subjected to soulless concrete and steel utilitarian forms, but not quite, as remnants of beauty were preserved, sprinkled in cityscapes like weed seeds waiting to sprout. Hardly a home or office today doesn't have a few poorly cared for plants, with some notion of Mother Nature's ultimate goodness firmly rooted in mankind's medulla. Gardens where there's little separation between hand carved artifice and vine entwined organic growth act as a soul balm. He occasionally rode past fabulous

gardens and got tiny glimpses through thick hedgerows. Mysteries of truth seem like that sometimes, little reveals that blast you back like a fire hose or gust of wind. Nobody can handle the Truth, not all at once. People are stunned by tiny fragments of it.

Bad academic experiences made him a bit cagey. Once took as Pass/Fail a course in Medieval Literature with a burnt out pedagogue. Just wanted to cover this reading, all those bloody adventures and earthy sagas, Aud the Deep Minded, Beowulf the Besieged, and Njal the Burnt. Fiery overt passions of Mediterranean peoples are well documented in literature and opera versus the dark but equally interesting broodings of Scandinavians. He realized there would be no pleasing Carlon, who would probably give him a D, but a Pass had no affect on his high cum. Carlon expected students to parrot back whatever they heard in lectures. He didn't take notes that way. Who could take dictation that fast? Court stenographers? Only actors recite lines. As with most professors, Carlon didn't appreciate having to think while correcting your test essays. Arguing his case based on Freudian concepts was enough to drive Dr. Demented into apoplectic fury and overdue retirement, perhaps a service to a community interested in actual education. After all, wasn't it supposed to be about learning to think for yourself? His best successes were when he threw himself into an effort, but not where biases had already been stacked against him. All disciplines intermix in real life; professors can hide from what's real all they want in some narrow study. In an ivory tower, any threat to their neat arrangement need not be tolerated when they have the final word, a mark, with which to dispel any questions about their supremacy.

Bike clubs seem to spin on the same egomania. He designed 13 new club rides, drew elegant maps for them and redrew as many others; doubled ride attendance with all his chatter, showing up when nobody else did, and shaming members into it; helped newcomers feel welcome by sticking by them; painted arrows; wrote, publicized, and tabulated their first broad-based preference survey. He counted among his influences better web content, an email list of those interested in advocacy, expanded participation by both officers and riders, new faces, rides never before tried, and subtle effects upon individuals who needed self perspective. Of course, insiders always take credit, demand you fall in line behind their illicit lead, and stifle dissenting voices. It does take skill to make people think they thought of it themselves.

Following all this, he was told he couldn't associate himself with club. It stemmed from one negative comment to a pompous

ass in another state, who turned out to chairman of national bicycling coalition. People only fall for those who make them feel good, loathe those who remind them of their responsibilities. Ask any mom. The main thing wrong with a club is usually its administrator. Club policies and minions who impose them are no better. Hard to decide who is more bilious and 1-dimensional, whiny bike zealots/haters, who are entitled to their opinions, or club officers, who slap them down for insubordination, when they should be paragons of diplomacy and proven conduits for good new ideas. If frequent volunteering posed such a threat, maybe that said more about what evil they've done and their insecurities. All officers ever did was bungle chances you gave them, grab kudos for themselves and scare away volunteers. He was getting too close to hidden facts. Working for free without the simple gratitude of letting him do so without restriction just wasn't worth doing.

There are different types of workers. You'd think it was mostly quid pro quo, work for pay. Happens sometimes, he guessed. Mostly met people nursing from the nipple of corporate indifference; bosses like this type of subordinate: not enough ambition to lose serenity over, not much of a rivalry, someone easily dismissed for cause. While interviewing a Vice President for his internal newswire, it slipped, "The role of software developers is to never complete a project." Development, engineering, marketing, research and a host of other departments drain surplus profits, rob shareholder dividends, and withhold decent pay from factory floor. Executives understood. They were doing exactly the same, only on an expanded scale, and needed a buffer between them and untamed masses. Serving themselves, they ignore stakeholders. Building empires and filling roles, valuable processes got trampled, not the ones that wind up on resumes. Such as a gentle touch with people who seem unlikely to become customers: they sometimes turn out to influence business in unknown ways, like gray haired mothers who put in a good word for you with their sons who happened to be company presidents. By the same token, nipple feeders can cause irreparable harm without anyone ever knowing. They can choke good will while completing that XYZ project within deadline under budget, even pasting a new line on a resume already posted to MonsterOrgasm.com, where they might get a new offer and spread their poison into ever new realms.

The very hint that you might leave for more pay made you intolerable. Better to show up and stagnate, suck the teat, than be ambitious, enjoy what you're doing, and grow. He had to get it out of his mind that, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well."

The most obnoxious were people who simply did a conscientious job as best they could under increasingly hostile demands, since bosses hate those they victimize. One must never forget that continued employment is subject to how well one manages gossip and malicious rumors spread by inferiors and mental defectives, the only people who seem to last forever in companies. If they were smarter, they'd move up or out. Sometimes he thought it was far better to be a nobody on the dole and do nothing remarkable than toil in a cell of unemployed exile sifting through facts to explore truths while cashing in retirement accounts and pawning away everything he'd worked for to survive the relentless flow of utility bills and property assessments. Society is only satisfied when it exacts its toll from you. Hadn't he yet earned a right to do nothing?

He was forced by pecuniary circumstances to spend long quiet days slowly unloading, like a massive battery or capacitor that slowly drains away after having been trickle charged for years. He was almost grateful for this mid-career break, a sabbatical put off far too long. Surprising how much pain can be silently absorbed and how readily you can release it once threats of reprisal are removed. Without pressure, it didn't sting as much. He just had mild regrets and quiet sadness. Few are those who care enough to treat you with simple respect. Each insult borne builds into a pent up reservoir of degradation, despair, futility, and guilt. When a dam breaks, the flood batters all in its path. Kick a dog enough times and it's sure to bite and scare away anyone who might train it not to. Blind ambition and petty jealousies are always ugly, and totally rampant. Alienation puts everyone under house arrest.

Yet there was the crab, flowering again a year later, after all had been let go, vibrant for another few weeks, with forest green and magenta hues speckled with delicate yellow that looks so gorgeous against a sky of powder blue or complimentary blend of light gray and white of Spring clouds. He was sure it bloomed like this every year for 20 or more, but only now had he the chance to admire its beauty. Crabbing and complaining are beautifully efficient ways to distinguish yourself, however phony or stupid you really are. The space you get yourself into can be anciently dusty, bitterly corrosive, coldly dark or warmly snug at any given time. Coordinates where you intercept this time/space make all the difference.

