

Title 'Making it Up As I Go Along'

by Jamie Graham

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'Making it Up...' is the memoir of Doug King, a British inventor, Creative Director and copywriter, who moves to America. Doug's ideas are original and clever. His life story is full of amusing anecdotes, and interactions with well-known rock stars and business entrepreneurs. The narrative jumps forwards and back in time, as his adventures and relationships are described in often-explicit detail.

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Date 2/10/19

Signed Jamie graham

Making It Up As I Go Along.

A Memoir.

By Jamie Graham.

Preface.

What you are about to read (or are at least considering,) is true.

Up to a point.

Many of the happenings described either happened exactly, or mostly as written. A good few did not. These are exaggerated, happened in the imagination or were completely dreamed up.

But who's to say whether that counts as reality?

This, then, is a work of faction as much as fiction, consisting of a series of anecdotes, ideas and fabulations, woven into a life story.

Any resemblance to actual persons or events is coincidental. The lawyers made me say that. You could track some of persons down and ask for yourself; but that would irritate them, and me. So please don't.

Each chapter is marked with a year, a song, and what the subject was wearing. In case this is ever made into a movie.

Chapters.

1. 2018. 'Crossroads' –John Mayer. T-shirt; Uniqlo jeans; Black Adidas sneakers.
2. 1969. 'Crossroads' –Cream. Bell-bottoms; floral shirt; thigh length fur coat.
3. 1985. 'Eight Miles High.' –The Byrds. Tight jeans; Plain T-shirt; single-breasted jacket with sleeves rolled to elbow.
4. 1958. 'Apache' –The Shadows. School uniform: grey flannel short pants; white shirt; black blazer with gold trim.
5. 1995. 'Sympathy for the Devil'–The Rolling Stones. White Levi 508's; striped henley T-shirt; white Converse high tops.
6. 1964. 'Keep on Running' –Spencer Davis Group. Brown suede Chelsea boots; jeans; long, V-neck sweater.
7. 2019. 'Ahead of My Time' –Teddybears. Black Uniqlo jeans; navy hoodie; brown leather Frye hightops.
8. 1967. 'So you want to be a rock 'n roll star' : The Byrds. Bell-bottomed jeans; tie-dyed T shirt; brown leather jacket.
9. 2004. 'Route 66: Depeche Mode. Cargo shorts; Navy Titleist golf polo; white, low-cut Converse sneakers.
10. 1968. 'Chest Fever': The Band. Black Chelsea Boots; Jeans; white Henley T shirt.
11. 1969. 'All Right Now': Free. Outrageously bell-bottomed jeans; Granny (Henley) T shirt.
12. 1969. 'Superstition.' : Stevie Wonder. Flared Bib n' brace overalls; floral shirt.
13. 1970. 'Get Back' : The Beatles. 'Take Six' black suit; bold, blue and white striped shirt.
14. 1971. 'Maggie May' : Rod Stewart. Black leather bell-bottoms; blue button-down shirt; black mid length boots.
15. 1971. 'Brown Sugar': Rolling Stones. Flared Jean; Chelsea F.C. shirt; Black Converse Hi-tops
16. 1967. 'Big Boss Man' : Grateful Dead. Black trousers; double breasted grey houndstooth jacket; pale blue button down shirt; black knitted tie.
17. 2017. 'Rose of Erin': Joe Strummer. Distressed olive, linen shorts (Barney's;) Navy Everlane T; slides.
18. 1975. 'Cocaine': Eric Clapton. Jeans; T-shirt; white, hi-top Converse sneakers.
19. 1995. 'Sultans of Swing': Dire Straits. Denim cut-offs; white Henley; leather jacket; white, low-top, Converse sneakers.

20. 1985. *'Lay Down Sally': Eric Clapton. White jeans; blue, pin-striped blazer (cuffed); blue, low-cut, Converse Jack Purcell's.*
21. 1989. *'I Won't Back Down': Tom Petty. Jeans; white T-shirt; blue, button down shirt (unbuttoned.)*
22. 1990. *'The Waiting': Linda Rondstadt. Light grey linen suit; dark blue button down shirt; white low-cut Converse sneakers.*
23. 2017. *'Happy': The Rolling Stones. Charcoal, long-sleeve Henley; Black jeans; black hi-top sneakers.*
24. 1991. *'Hideaway: John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Blue T-shirt; pale grey shorts; sneakers.*
25. 1996. *'Alone Again Or': Love. Double-breasted, Navy jacket; blue and white striped shirt; jeans.*
26. 1988. *'Goin' Back': The Byrds. Black and white hooped T shirt; Jeans; Black high-top Converse sneakers.*
27. 1997. *'Tubthumping': Chumbawumba. Light grey khakis; black Polo shirt; black & white FootJoy Classics.*
28. 2017. *'Mr. Brightside': The Killers. Black hoodie; graphite jeans; black suede chukka's.*
29. 2018. *'Foundations': Kate Nash. Very tight Lucky Strike jeans; David Sheldrick Foundation T shirt; Keds.*
30. 2018. *'So Sorry': Feist. Jeans; floral blouse; ballet flats.*
31. 1983. *'Who Can It Be Now': Men at Work. Black Levis; dark blue, double-breasted blazer; dark brown, suede desert boots.*
32. 2017. *'Johnny Be Good': Chuck Berry. Dark blue Chelsea FC hoodie; jeans; white hi-tops.*
33. 2018. *'Il fait chaud': Corine & Busy P. Nike running shell; Under Armor pants; Newton running shoes.*
34. 2018. *'Everyone's a Winner': Hot Chocolate. Grey cashmere hoodie; black jeans; Allbirds sneakers.*
35. 2017. *'Runaway': Bonnie Raitt. Lucky Jeans; Madewell cashmere sweater; sneakers.*
36. 2017. *'Straight Shot': Dvotchka. Under Armor running shorts; Nike running shell; Brooks running sneakers.*
37. 1974. *'Imagine' John Lennon. Ancient tie-dye T shirt; denim shorts; dirty white Stan Smith's.*
38. 2019. *'Firmament Vacation': The Soundtrack of Our Lives. Everlane jeans; Merrell winter Chelsea boots; Long sleeve T shirt; Uniqlo vest.*
39. 2019. *'Malamente': Rosalía. Lucky Jeans; Madewell sweater; uniqlo quilted vest.*

40. 2007. 'Saturday Morning': Eels. Light khaki shorts; navy FootJoy polo; white FJ ankle socks; white FJ Classics.
41. 2019. 'Jumping Jack Flash': Ananda Shankar. Uniqlo jeans; Everlast cashmere hoodie.
42. 2019. 'Astronomy Domine': The Claypool Lennon Delirium. Jeans, High neck Under Armor sweat shirt, Merrell Winter Boots.
43. 2019. 'Warm Sound' Zero 7, Mozes. Pale grey jeans; white Henley; white New Balance sneakers.
44. 2019. 'Shut 'Em Up ' The Prodigy. Leggings; long T shirt, cool belt bought from a local artsy woman.
45. 2019. 'The Staunton Lick '. Lemon Jelly. Black Jeans; black hoodie; black hi-tops.
46. 2019. 'List of Demands': The Kills. Lucky Jeans; white T shirt; antique, embroidered vest.
47. 2019. 'Drinkee': Sofi Tukker. Jeans; Chelsea FC hoodie; white hi-top trainers.
48. 1984. 'My City Was Gone': Pretenders. Navy sweat suit with Chelsea FC badge; White Harrison FC shirt; navy shorts; white socks; Adidas soccer shoes.
49. 2019: 'If you leave me now.': Chicago. Oversized Oxford University Rugby Shirt; white belt; white Keds.
50. 2019. 'You Keep Me Hanging On.': Vanilla Fudge. Jeans, blue and white striped button down shirt, dark blue double-breasted wool jacket.
51. 2019. 'At the Border Guy'; Joe Strummer and the Mescleros. Long, flowy, blue dress.
52. 2019. 'This Must Be The Place'; Talking Heads. Khaki shorts; navy blue T shirt; Adidas slides.
53. 2019. 'Separate'; Hot Chip. Blue and white striped boxers; white T shirt.
54. 2018. 'Pioneers' : Mars Lasar.. Jeans; Under Armour, Long sleeved 'T'; Hoodie.
55. 2019. 'Red House' : Buddy Guy. Jeans; grey NYU T-shirt; grey Merrells.

A Spotify playlist of these songs can be found at:

<https://open.spotify.com/user/1213844121/playlist/2UBCtphCFcr1hhnQCrk4FC?si=j3Vjh1ZIQLO6FiYB3yAzVA>

1. 2018. *'Crossroads'* –John Mayer. T-shirt. Uniqlo jeans. Black Adidas sneakers.

Doug is sitting in the hair stylist's chair watching white hair falling on a black smock.

Yes, it's white; not the very light grey color it was the last time he noticed it. Not the salt and pepper color it looked, in a certain, optimistic light, a few years ago. Certainly not the thick, long, light brown locks he had the first time he paid for a proper hair stylist.

2. 1969. *'Crossroads'* –Cream. Bell-bottoms, floral shirt, thigh length fur coat.

London, World's End, Chelsea: A men's hair stylist called Todd's, one of the first such places to open in swinging London. Doug's hair was fashionably long then, though not fashionably styled. It had probably a year's growth from the last haircut he had had, which was at a traditional barber's shop. His friend, Peter Heath, who wore smart, three-piece, bell-bottom suits and wide, floral ties insisted he went to Todd's.

Douglas was impressed -though a little surprised- to be offered cappuccino (which he accepted,) a manicure (which he declined,) and generally the kind of concierge service he'd never associated with a barber's shop. Psychedelic rock music played; trendy men sat around looking cool; girls with thick black mascara, long, straight hair with bangs, smoked long, black cigarettes and looked hot but bored.

The stylist discussed layering, (Doug told him he wanted to keep his hair long) and showed him some photographs of contemporary pop stars. Doug picked out the Small Faces. Their hairstyles featured a single point parting in the front, middle of the head from which hair flowed out in all directions. No more the goofy, schoolboy side parting that Doug had had since he could remember.

His hair was snipped, clipped and thinned, then washed and blown-dry. 'Product' was applied. When he looked at the mirror, a rather trendy looking bloke with Doug's face stared back.

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The thinning white hair that Doug is left with now is still combed back from the front. It makes a vaguely successful attempt to cover the top of his head, but leaves a small, circular bald spot visible from behind, though not from Doug's vantage point in the mirror.

He wonders if any remaining members of the Small Faces see the same thing.

3. 1985. *'Eight Miles High' –The Byrds. Tight jeans, Plain T-shirt, single-breasted jacket with sleeves rolled to elbow.*

These days, when I'm bored, or procrastinating, I waste my time online. The kind of surfing I do is more akin to just hanging out: Any learning is osmotic and incidental.

When I was a kid in England, we had 'annuals': compilations of stuff from comic books, kids' magazines, sports info, pop music pix and articles. All manner of crap, really. On rainy days, I'd look for an annual I hadn't re-read in a while and aimlessly troll through it.

One of the few educational ones was called 'The Wonder Book of Wonders'. It was a quasi encyclopedia, featuring captioned photos and short descriptions of things like the Pyramids, Niagara Falls, Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall.

It also had sketchy write-ups of scientific wonders like Puffing Billy, and The Rocket (early British steam engines;) Blue Streak (Britain's first –and last? - space rocket;) and early cars.

One rather random inclusion was a disproportionately long piece about an underground railway built in 1928 by the British post office to transport mail bags around the half dozen or so mainline railway terminals in London.

It was one of the earliest driverless trains, but the factoid that piqued my interest was how the tracks were built. There was a significant incline up before each station to help slow the train with less braking, and a matching slope down after each station to save fuel while getting the train up to speed again.

How cool! What a delightfully simple, logical 'wonder'!

And why the hell didn't every railway –underground, over ground or suspended from gantries, girders and cantilevers- feature the same gravitational system?

The fact that in 'those' days, energy conservation wasn't a big deal makes it all the more surprising that it was incorporated into the GPO train.

Anyway the concept appealed to me and stuck like plaque in my memory.

Fast-forward several years: Energy/fuel conservation is now a very big deal, for reasons of both cost and the environment. And I'm flying between London and New York in a bloody big, wide-body jet, guzzling gallons of expensive fuel and spewing out matching amounts of climate-warming carbon monoxide.

I had myself guzzled a few glasses of wine with my airline food and was in a contentedly comfortable trance, listening to music and half-watching an airline movie, so I didn't immediately notice a posse of airline staff coming through the plane, talking with passengers.

At the center of the group was the airline owner, Richard Branson (before he was 'Sir',) asking people how they liked his new airline.

"You look comfortable," he said as he came passed me. I agreed.

"Anything you'd like to tell me about the flight?"

"It's great." I replied. "First trip on Virgin; much better than BA." He gave me a broad, toothy smile and a thumbs up, and was about to move on.

"But the airport could be better." I added. "Specifically, the runways."

Branson looked curious. I ploughed on.

“Of course, you can’t have your own Virgin runways,” I continued, “But if you ever do design an airport, you should consider the GPO underground.”

I realized that I had a very short window of opportunity to make my pitch before he presumed my sanity was dodgy and moved on, letting one of the attendants placate me with a coupon for a free airline something or other.

“You could save thousands in jet fuel and make takeoffs and landings safer.”

Branson paused. I quickly described the GPO mail track inclines, and how a bowl-shaped runway could slow down landing planes, and help accelerate takeoffs, while also pointing the sky bound planes in an appropriate, upward direction.

Branson sat down beside me. (I had scored an aisle seat with an empty, adjoining aisle seat.)

“What are you drinking?” he asked. “Have another with me.”

For the next twenty minutes, we discussed the idea. Branson concurred that the cost of fuel spent taking off and reverse-thrusting the engines to brake the plane was considerable, and that using simple gravity to mitigate it would make a nice dent over a period of time.

And as we thought aloud together, we also considered that a runway built down below regular ground level might also reduce noise levels.

We finished our Virgin (though neither one, virgin) cocktails, and exchanged business cards. He wished me luck with the invention I was going to pitch and assured me that my return flight would be in first class.

I’m still waiting for that airport to be built.

4. 1958. *'Apache' –The Shadows. School uniform: grey flannel short pants, white shirt, black blazer with gold trim.*

The Small Faces certainly weren't sent away to boarding school from the age of 7 on. Doug's first school –Alesbury- was only about twenty miles away from where his family lived, but it could have been in a different country. His parents visited every six weeks or so and per the school rules, were allowed either to watch him playing football or cricket on a Saturday, or to take him out to lunch on a Sunday.

They typically arrived after the game had started –god forbid his Dad's morning round of golf should be interrupted- and if it were football, he was unaware they had arrived until half-time. Doug was quite good at most sports. He was picked every season for football and cricket teams: under 10's, under 11's, 3rd XI, 2nd XI and 1st XI. He played wing half, which is now called a midfielder. He was pretty good at supporting the defense, moving the ball up field, then passing it on to our forwards. He won his 1st XI colours after a few matches.

(The summer holiday when he was 13, he persuaded his mother to take him to the Chelsea F.C. junior camp at Mitchum in South London. There were hundreds of kids his age aspiring to become professional soccer players. Doug held his own in 'medium' level squad games and was even moved up one day to an advanced level game. But it was clear that these kids were hugely talented. After a half, Doug was subbed out for another midfielder. That boy was named Alan Hudson. He went on to play for the Chelsea first team, and was called up to the England international squad for a couple of games.)

On the cricket pitch, Doug was a decent if unspectacular batsman, and a similarly solid medium pace bowler. If there was no match on Saturday Doug won the battle to get to be taken out to lunch on Sunday instead. This meant his Dad couldn't finish –or start- his golf. They had to be at the school by 11.00 to attend chapel before taking him off to some squireish pub in the Surrey countryside for lunch. They had to have him back at school around 6.00 for evening chapel.

School itself was fine. Doug made friends and did well enough academically to coast along if not distinguish himself. There were the usual heroes and villains and clichéd characters: the comedians who were always getting into trouble, the boys who excelled at everything, the ones who failed ubiquitously and of course the kids who wet their beds.

Failure brought horrendous, unending, shame and misery as well as shockingly mean nicknames: Stinky; Worm; Thicky; Dummy and Cripple (Yes, a boy who had a deformed leg was routinely addressed from day one, as Cripple, or affectionately, Crips!) In hindsight –hell, even there and then- Doug realized it was cruel, and that he should have made a stand against such systemic bullying. The sad truth was that it was a case of ‘there but for great, good fortune go I.’ Doug was relieved, to be an average Joe. He didn’t stand out, so he escaped any attention. (Indeed, he remembers in class actually not raising his hand too often to avoid being dubbed a know-it-all. That could be almost as bad as being singled out for being dense.)

So after five years of studiously swimming in the middle of the pack, Doug left the school in Surrey and was dispatched to a far colder climate: a spartan hell appropriately located on the barren, chilly, north shore of the Firth of Forth, just outside Edinburgh in Scotland.

5.1995. *'Sympathy for the Devil'—The Rolling Stones. White Levi 508's, striped henley T-shirt, white Converse high tops.*

An iconic Annie Leibovitz photograph from the '70's shows Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts in an immaculate Savile Row suit with a similarly bespoke gentlemen's umbrella by his side.

Some fifty feet behind him, blurred by the camera's short focal length, you can make out several people with their umbrellas up, struggling in what looks like a rather gusty rain.

The portrait was taken on a street in Paris and Watts recalls that Leibovitz wanted him to open his umbrella for the shot. He declined, however. The umbrella—an extremely expensive, Swaine Adeney Brigg solid hickory stick- had been a thoughtful Christmas present from Keith Richards, and Watts didn't want to risk the wind turning it inside out. Perhaps he didn't even want to get it wet.

“They should be able to make unbreakable bloody brollies by now.” He observed in his droll monotone voice to one of Leibovitz' assistants charged with holding an ordinary umbrella over Watts in between shots.

In her engaging book 'Inventology,' Pagan Kennedy breaks down inventions into several different categories.

Two of these differentiate between inventions that answer a need, and serendipitous discoveries whose purposes have to be figured out after they've been made.

Kennedy doesn't rank the merits of these different types against one another, but I always considered inventions that solve problems superior to those that needed a problem retrofitted in order to make them relevant.

I was wrestling with my own invention, hoping that it would deliver exactly what the world needed: a new kind of umbrella.

The history of the device used universally to shield us from the wet is long, but the form has barely changed since the Chinese first invented it around 25AD.

The first umbrellas were in fact parasols, used for shelter against the sun not the rain. This was because effective waterproof materials hadn't been invented. Tight weaved cloth soon started to provide that protection.

Either way, the umbrella is a flawed design. For proof of this, consider that in the U.S. so many umbrella patents are filed that the U.S. Patent Office employs four full-time specialists dedicated to assessing them, and that as of 2008, there were over 3,000 registered patents for umbrella-related inventions.

So why the hell was I wasting my time –and money- in this overcrowded space?

Because I had an answer to the key problem: how to make an umbrella that didn't turn inside out and break. My invention couldn't. It didn't have the rigid stretchers or struts that gradually or suddenly get bent out of shape or snap.

Nor, for the same reason, would mine be capable of poking out someone's eye in a crowded street.

What provided the necessary tension to keep the umbrella's canopy stretched tautly out were struts made from a gauge of hollow rubber somewhere between a bicycle inner tube and a condom.

Sealed at the far end, these tubes would meet at the center of the umbrella and connect to the handle. The handle was a modified, high-pressure, bicycle pump with a valve that could switch between blowing air into the struts and sucking it back out.

The device worked perfectly in theory; I just had to find the means to make a working prototype.

Fortunately my friend and art director, Roy, provided two kinds of assistance.

His illustration served to accompany the written description, and his brother Peter was a hydraulic engineer who was able to assess the invention and deem it viable.

Actually perhaps Roy's most valuable contribution was his third. I was calling it 'Inflatabrella' until he came up with 'Pumperella'.

Armed with the description and the 'expert' validation, I was advised to pursue the elusive patent before shopping Pumperella around to manufacturers for physical development.

I contacted a patent attorney in Washington D.C. and forked over the several thousand dollars necessary to start the process.

To my delight, the patent searches suggested that despite the plethora of applications, no one had come up with the same exact combination of soft, flexible, air-filled struts and switch valve pump handle.

So I was cleared to spend the thousands more dollars needed to apply for the patent. Whoopee.

However, my attorney suggested that I first contacted manufacturers.

"Better to know for sure that it will work before placing your bet." He suggested. He drafted a simple NDA with which to protect my interests.

So I got in touch with a bunch of rubber companies, and one umbrella company –Totes- just for the heck of it.

Totes replied first with a pro forma letter explaining that due to the high volume of ideas submitted, they couldn't respond. Guess that's what happens when your core product is fundamentally flawed.

But the R&D nerds at Goodyear and Michelin were both confident that they could create the perfect rubber consistency for Pumperella to function. I was pumped myself.

Then just as quickly, my hopes were dashed.

I had earlier been in touch with a business consultant to map out how to bring Pumperella to market. Now that a patent was on the cards, she began to explore the process further. And encountered a major stumbling block.

Like many commodity items, the vast majority of umbrellas are made in China. In fact only a tiny few, high-end brands aren't. Indeed, to make manufacturing inflatable umbrellas profitable, they would have to be made in China.

And China doesn't recognize or respect U.S. patents.

If Pumperella looked like it was going to be even slightly successful in the marketplace, it would immediately be knocked-off. No one would agree to undertake making a product with that prognosis.

So, sorry, Charlie. You can't always get what you want.

6. 1964. *'Keep on Running' –Spencer Davis Group. Brown suede Chelsea boots; jeans; long, V-neck sweater.*

On the overnight train from London's King's Cross station to Edinburgh, Doug's older brother Fred, was charged with telling him the facts of life. Their father had –shockingly- delegated this iconic duty probably because, he was in the early stages of the various cancers, which would take his life four years later.

Fred and Doug joked about The Alesbury headmaster's legendary 'talk' to school leavers "It's just like chickens laying eggs...." from their bunk beds on the train. Generations of thirteen-year-olds had graduated to the harsh realities of their next schools armed with that!

Of course Doug knew better. Hansmark Major (no nickname, unlike his unfortunate, younger, bed-wetting sibling, 'Stinky' Hansmark Minor,) had achieved certain notoriety a few years earlier, by telling scores of inquisitive 11-year-olds in the school library how it was really done:

"The man pees all over the woman, but it has to be done at the right time of the month..."

It seemed a not unlikely answer to the question all the boys wondered about in an ignorant, innocent fog that seems remarkably naïve now. Doug thought there might be more to it, having watched –along with several other boys- as Mark DeVos demonstrated masturbation in a dormitory room one evening. But surely no woman would be willing to watch five minutes of frantic, red-faced tool tugging and attendant grunting? There was obviously something else.

Most of Fred's information concerned the rampant homosexuality Doug would become aware of at the Scottish school. Now that seemed completely foreign and unlikely: Boys just a few years older sharing lists of crushes?

Doug was to discover that this was one of many manifestations that this school had a cruel, unfriendly culture, which he would never

adapt to. That it was mainly all talk didn't mitigate how other forms of cruel teasing and bullying were common and ignored by the staff.

Again, he wished he could report that he went against the trend and tried to corral the behavior. But again, survival demanded that he looked after himself and avoided criticizing his peers. There were enough schisms between Doug and the average Jock there.

For one, the kind of football they played was Rugby not soccer. Doug's love and aptitude was for the latter. (He held his own at cricket, but that was considered a lesser sport.)

One thing he appreciated then –and in the years to come- was golf. The school enjoyed a wealth of excellent golf links a short bike or bus ride away: Longniddry, the championship Gullane courses and Muirfield, frequent host of The Open Championship.

Introduced to the game by his parents, Doug loved the diverse beauty and tranquility of golf courses. He frequently spent afternoon hours playing these courses. The views of the Firth of Forth and the county of Fife on the other side were stunning. In Scotland, golf is a genuine social equalizer. People of all classes play; handicaps ensure a good match can be had regardless of levels.

By the time Doug left the school, he had developed a very sound game, reflected by a single-digit handicap. He would play golf rarely in his early twenties, but more often as he aged. And golf was to play a useful role briefly in his later career.

The wretched Scottish school specialized academically in math and the sciences. Doug was barely average at math, and simply unable to comprehend chemistry. His strengths -languages, literature and art- were poorly supported there, and in the case of art, considered the strange, not 'serious,' interest of quirky bohemian types. Indeed, his fellow arts stream colleagues were an odd, unsympathetic lot.

He never developed any real friendships there, and was as relieved as he was scared to wrangle a transfer to a French school for six months in his fourth year.

(In fact, Doug managed this by racking up three major school rule infringements for which he was suspended. His father intervened and arranged the exchange.)

By comparison, Doug's time at Collège de la Providence in Amiens was magical. Though run by Jesuits, considered harsh disciplinarians, it was a liberal oasis compared to the Scottish jail.

For the first time, he enjoyed wonderful school food: hot baguettes and bowls of delicious coffee for breakfast; tasty soups and stews for lunch; pates, cold cuts and salads with more, fresh, warm bread for dinner. And wine! That for which you would be expelled if caught drinking it at Scotland was on every table at lunch and dinner in generous carafes! And guess what? No one got 'drunk'.

Doug played 'real' football and as England had just won the World Cup earlier that year, the French kids expected him to be good. With such a confidence boost, he did play well.

He was left to his own studies, excepting that he had to produce a 'paper' on his French experiences by the end of the second term, so that he spent a couple of hours every day not attending classes, but sitting in a nearby café, reading the Herald Tribune and drinking coffee and cognac.

He was lent an old Vélo Solex (a funky bicycle with a motor over the front wheel, used ubiquitously throughout France) so that he could explore the countryside around Amiens. And unlike in Scotland where the dreaded school barbers came every fortnight to execute mandatory, horrendous, pudding-bowl haircuts, the French kids took care of their own hair and clothes. No school uniforms then, and, for Doug, the chance to grow his hair to Rolling Stones' length.

The Collège was mainly a day school. Only a small percent of the students were boarders, and Doug discovered his first week there that the school was actually closed at le weekend! WTF!? No one told him that (actually, he had been told very little about the place ahead of time.)

Where to go? Luckily, one of the kids who had endured an exchange at the Scottish school a year earlier anticipated his dilemma and invited him to spend the weekend at his house. (Merci, Xavier Prophette!) From then on, Doug pointedly befriended kids with a view to a weekend invitation. And was delighted to discover that his ethnic 'difference' made him appealing, at least for three nights, to provincial French families.

He spent enjoyable weekends in Amiens, nearby Lille and Valenciennes, and Paris.

Several boys lived there, spending the week nights at Collège in Amiens, and on numerous occasions, Doug took the late afternoon train with them to Gare Du Nord where he spent fantastic – 'formidable'- weekends being shown around the city and enjoying even better food!

By the time he had to leave France, Doug's French was pretty much fluent. He found himself thinking and even dreaming in French. It was a much-changed teenager who was picked up at Victoria station by his dad.

He had bought a few hip clothes, including a very old, rather ratty used fur coat, and his hair was legitimately shoulder length. His father was aghast and actually insisted that they stop at the barber before going home. Fortunately Doug was able to convince the barber to merely 'tidy up' his shag, and his father disappeared a few days later for another hospital stay.

That summer was going to be the best ever.

7. 2019. *'Ahead of My Time' –Teddybears. Black Uniqlo jeans; navy hoodie; brown leather Frye high-tops.*

“The P.M. is all over this. She doesn't want a barrow load of lame ideas, she wants one brilliant one. The London agency is working on it, but it's a home game for you people in The States.”

I was back in ad land, working at the Boston branch of a global agency. Our client was the U.K. government. Specifically, the government that had inherited the Brexit mandate to leave the European community. It was proving unpopular. In Britain, in Europe, even in America.

So they were looking for ways to change the conversation about Britain. To make it 'Great' again in the eyes of America so that British companies could hold their heads up once more.

To make it great in a particularly British way so that Americans would want British products and British vacations.

To make it great so that the British pound would start rebounding from its feeble and embarrassing Brexit low.

The man briefing us was a civil servant in some government department. We were told he was senior and important, but he was still just a messenger. The British Ambassador to the U.S. was also present. And so were half a dozen of their wallies, fly-watchers and random lackeys.

I was on the agency team because, well, because being a Brit, I obviously had a unique insight.

After the briefing a few of the team members repaired to a nearby British (Irish, really,) pub to chat and hope that the imported beer would inspire us.

“What kind of British thing are they hoping for?” Asked Amanda a private school educated New Yorker whose Brahmin accent was sometimes presumed to be British.

“The London Olympic games were very popular...” Suggested Doug.

“I think the Royal family are the key.” Said Roger. “Maybe they could be persuaded to have some more babies –and actually give birth to one here. That would be huge: A princess with dual citizenship.”

As the beer flowed, so did the bad ideas: A Harry Potter Netflix series; a James Bond/Jason Bourne movie; high tea happy hour; an arranged marriage between Pippa Middleton and any Kennedy; a series of matches between top baseball and cricket players; drive-on-the-left Tuesdays; Crosby, Stills, McCartney & Starr.

I have been working in advertising for many years, despite frequent attempts to invent my way out. It’s actually a relatively organized forum for inventors: the briefs we are given tend to narrow the creative playing field down to the point where seasoned practitioners can almost predict the spread of idea submissions.

Occasionally something truly, unexpectedly, original comes along. But typically these concepts are ‘out-of-the-box’ because they break a rule or three laid down in the brief.

So you might think that the pressure of always having to come up with a great idea gets mitigated with experience. I never find this true.

With every brief for every assignment comes the fear of not being able to deliver: of getting block.

Just as athletes, actors, musicians or any other professional who has to perform live gets nervous before going on stage, my recurring nightmares were of the naked, I’ve-forgotten-my-lines, don’t-have-a-single-half-decent-idea variety.

But on this occasion, I had an idea immediately. Because I was already working on a concept that could answer this brief.

My American born and bred daughter's favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. It brings the combination of a get together, no gift pressures, and a predictable –and delicious- dinner.

Having been raised in Britain with no Thanksgiving, my favorite holiday, for similar reasons, is Boxing Day: no gift pressure (for better or worse, the previous day's presents are in the past,) and a predictable, delicious dinner made up of leftovers from the Christmas day feast.

Boxing day is thought of as a rather quirky, British holiday. Also celebrated in a few ex-Commonwealth countries –Canada, Australia, and New Zealand- it's generally unknown in America where people either rush to the shopping malls on the day after Christmas to exchange their gifts and take advantage of the sales, or worse, go right back to work.

Even where it is observed, people have largely forgotten the origins and reasons for Boxing Day.

Its name comes from the custom of the privileged classes filling boxes with food, clothing, unwanted toys and other gifts, as alms for the poor.

In this way, those who had to serve on the holidays, and who could barely afford presents and fine food anyway, got something one day later.

That form of observation and degree of servitude is largely over. But of course there are still many who cannot afford food and gifts at the holidays.

I had written a treatment for a short, animated movie that told the story of Boxing Day. Those to whom I'd shown it, had liked it. (The 'script' can be read at the end of this piece.)

With the right animation, music and voices, it just might be capable of joining those other evergreen, holiday shorts: 'How The Grinch Stole Christmas', 'A Charlie Brown Christmas' and 'Frosty the Snowman.'

What if we could use the movie as a way to introduce Boxing Day to America: To create a focused day of giving back in an updated form of the original British tradition?

(What if we got a British company with a significant American presence to sponsor Boxing Day USA, with the support and help of the British government?)

If there's one thing a client likes more than a good idea, it's a good idea all planned out and perfectly packaged with a pretty bow on top.

So I coopted my producer Claire, an enterprising and hard-working human machine to help me put the pieces in place.

We needed three parties: an inspired animation company to produce the movie on spec; an appropriate charity that would move people to support the effort; and a company to sponsor it all. And claim the brand kudos if all went well. And it would be best if all of these were British concerns with a US presence.

For the first, a brilliant production company, Claire used her limitless Rolodex connections. She connected with a connection who was connected to the legendary Terry Gilliam. It was perfect karma. Terry's birthday is December 26th. The Python animator agreed to create key frames to illustrate the presentation and ratchet up the edgy madness of the narrative to a manic level.

With Terry directing the animation, the doors were open to find celebrity voices for the parts of the narrator and Wilby. Claire lined up the British actors –and great friends- Stephen Fry and Hugh Lawrie.

As for a deserving beneficiary, for years, the British charity Oxfam had been providing food, medicines and emergency services to starving people around the world. Their US 'branch', Oxfam of

America, were staffed and set up to collect and distribute donations for the traditional pre-Christmas 'giving' period. It would be an easy pivot for them to provide and service the 'boxes' which people would fill the day after Christmas.

And providing another convenient case of concept Karma, we realized that we could tweak the holiday name from Boxing to (B)Oxfam Day to provide a strong mnemonic reminder.

So all we needed was a benefactor: A brand which would be willing to take a gamble costing a pretty penny but which could benefit significantly from a successful sponsorship.

It should be a dynamic British brand with an expanding US footprint. It could be a bank (Barclay's?) a car company (Mini?) a clothing line (Burberry?) a chain of shops (Harrods?) an airline.....

The key to the bow on top of the package was a crinkled business card I had been given years earlier. It just said Richard Branson not Sir Richard, but the contact information still worked.

"Sir Richard?"

"This is he...."

"I don't know if you remember me; we discussed how airport runways could be designed to save jet fuel several years ago."

"Yes. I still haven't got around to it. Actually Jet fuel prices haven't been too high of late."

The Boxing Day Video Script.

'Twas the day after Christmas
And, oh, what a noise!
As all through the house
Children played with new toys.

Saint Nick had delivered
All kinds of surprises,

The latest and greatest
-All colors, shapes, sizes...

Alf raced his trains
(Bio-fuel-hybrid-diesel)
While Dan booted up
a robotic weasel.

Fran charged the batteries
For her new dolls
Two virtual reality,
Fran-like molls.

Dan got Alf's trains
To careen off the tracks,
A metallic sound synched
To the cars twisted backs.

Then Alf powered his planes
With some gesture rec action
And Doug half-piped round
A new skateboard contraption.

The grown ups, were also all
Holler and hoot
with their pricey, high end,
Online catalogue loot.

But Wilby was sullen,
Silent and glum;
He'd opened his presents,
Looked once, and was done.

"Been there and played 'em."
He sneered with a sigh;
"Don't want other ones like it, Do I?"

That very same morning

A short way away,
Bertram, the same age,
Saw things not the same way.

He'd received no presents,
The morning before;
His family was destitute,
Homeless and poor.

Our Wilby decided
That he would go out.
No point staying home
Just to mope, sulk and pout.

Wilby walked by the Shelter
'So-called' home of the lad
Who had got no new toys
But yet wasn't sad.

Wilby looked, and took in
The bleak, wretched scene,
And realized his feelings
Were selfish and mean.

So he went right back home
And he re-wrapped his toys.
He'd decided to give them
To the poor boy.

And the happiness caused
By that jolly good deed
Went from Wilby to Bertram
The boy in great need.

And I heard him declaim
As he went home that day,
"Tis a good thing to give
What you can when you may."

8. 1967. *'So you want to be a rock 'n roll star' : The Byrds. Bell-bottomed jeans; tie-dyed T shirt; brown leather jacket.*

Sex, drugs and rock and roll: Well, two and a half out of three, anyway. Unlike school, where Doug had developed no good friendships, he had a real kindred spirit buddy –Steve- whom he saw for a month every summer. His parents, and Steve's, rented beachfront vacation homes on the east coast in Suffolk.

Every year since they were about eight, they'd reconnect. The process usually took a couple of days, but then they were back riding bikes, playing tennis, rowing on the lake, setting off fireworks together.

This year, 1967, their interests were the same but nuancially different. Steve showed up with a fancy stereo and a bunch of definitely West Coast artists' albums: The Byrds, Jefferson Airplane, Spirit and Love. Doug's musical contributions were American influenced British blues bands: John Mayall, Fleetwood Mac and Chicken Shack. Needless to say, they both had the 'staples': Beatles, Stones, Led Zep etc.

They spent hours indoors listening while their respective parents wondered why the hell they weren't outside in the summer sun. But when the sun did set, they set off for the nearest civilization. Steve had persuaded his parents to let him have a scooter, to wit, a metallic gold Lambretta.

Kitted out like mini-mods, they rode two miles down the coast to a town where they managed to get themselves into a local pub.

They drank pints of the local beer (Adnam's Southwold Ales) and stood around the jukebox chatting to other teens. Soon enough, someone volunteered some pot and Steve and Doug bought an ounce of Paki Black. Indifferent to them before, a group of three girls suddenly wanted to hang out and they would leave the pub at closing time (11:00 o'clock) to go and sit on the wall overlooking the harbor.

They would roll big, fat, British style joints liberally sprinkled with hash, and huddle together getting stoned.

Two into three doesn't 'go'; they needed one more bloke or one less bird. So they recruited Dave Steen who also hung out at The Cross Keys pub, and lived near them.

The details remain a bit of a fog to Doug, but he usually ended up with the tall one named Caroline when they split into pairs and found themselves a bit more space on the beach. Caroline was actually extremely pretty, way above Doug's reasonable expectations.

Steve and Dave reported that they were getting closer and closer to home base with their girlfriends. So did Doug. But in fact, by halfway through the month, he had only 'copped a feel' with Caroline during their very intense kissing sessions.

That suddenly changed one night. For all the analysis Doug applied in hindsight, he could really only determine that Caroline had decided that was to be 'the night.'

The mood in the pub was no different, nothing special. But when the group left, Caroline suggested they drive a couple of miles up the coast to where there was a long, isolated stretch of dunes overlooking the North Sea.

The three couples smoked some pot and drank Bacardi and cokes from a thermos flask that Dave Steen's family usually filled with hot tea.

Then Caroline took Doug's hand and led him away from the group. They walked for perhaps half a mile along the dune cliff. Caroline stopped and instigated a long, wet kiss with a lot more than the usual body pressing. Doug began his customary, fumbling attempts to touch Caroline's breasts, but she took the lead, pulling him down to the ground and rolling on top of him.

9. 2004. *'Route 66' –Depeche Mode. Cargo shorts; Navy Titleist golf polo; white, low-cut Converse sneakers*

(For several years, Doug worked at an ad agency in Boston. The agency 'local' was an edgy dive named 'Bukowski's' after the edgy American novelist. The pub held an annual writing contest. In 2004, the contest was sponsored by Guinness, and the submissions had to include the four words: 'Pen' 'Pint' 'Guinness' and 'Bukowski.' This is Doug's winning essay.)

The Part.
By Doug King.

Harold Pinter was on a quest.

In spring 2000, the renowned playwright had finally persuaded London's Royal National Theatre to stage an adaptation of his unfilmed 1972 cinema script, "Remembrance of Things Past." Pinter and director Di Travis had secured an impeccably talented cast to enact the dreamlike, biographical 'faction' of Marcel Proust's essays on time, memory, etiquette and sexuality. But to the names of Duncan Bell, Paul Ritter, Sebastian Harcombe and Julie Legrand, Pinter and Travis desperately wanted to add that of Penelope Keith, to play the part of the haggard, cocaine-high, Vicomtesse Guermantes with whom Swann performs a majestically explicit act of on-stage debauchery in Act 3.

Keith is best known for her portrayal of egregious country snob Audrey Fforbes-Hamilton in the BBC sitcom "To the Manor Born." But her sine qua non theatrical chops were established in Alan Ayckbourn's brilliant trilogy, "The Norman Conquests." What stiffer upper lip to perform the shocking staged fellatio, which Pinter's play called for, than Penelope Keith's?

At the time, Keith was in something of a professional valedictorian. She had been walking through forgettable character roles in uninspiring made-for-TV's, doing voices for the winceingly bad kids' program, "The Teletubbies", and even hosting one of many endearingly silly British

radio gardening shows. Married, with the requisite two children, she had her career further jinxed by receiving an OBE in the 1989 Queen's honours list and her very proper suburban Surrey hometown had even nominated her Sheriff.

To an actor in Keith's professional quagmire, Pinter's sudden interest would have been marvelous manna. Except. Except that Penelope Keith just happened to be enjoying a very steamy –though short-lived- affair with a Harvard English professor, which she understandably wanted to keep under wraps.

Pinter and Travis made the usual attempts, through agents, agents' agents, and agents' professional mutual acquaintances, to contact Keith. For weeks, they heard nothing. But further, pressured efforts unearthed the Massachusetts lead. And by chance, Harold Pinter had a scheduled engagement in Boston that April to receive an obscure award for his play, "Moonlight", whose 1994 American run, featuring Jason Roberts and Blythe Danner, had exceptionally and irrationally amused the Wilbur theatre's board of crusty trustees.

So it was that Harold Pinter traveled to Boston, and added a few days to his itinerary to track down and woo Ms. Keith. In the event, he played phone tag from his room at the Eliot Hotel for several chilly spring days with Penelope. She was intrigued enough by the great writer's attention to open her lines of communication a crack; he was even more intent on persuading her into the controversial role, now that he knew of her naughty real life controversy.

From several messages exchanged back and forth between them, it was established that they would meet for a drink, one evening, at a discreet local watering hole. Pinter decided that the climate on the prescribed day called for a well-served glass of stout to break the ice between him and Keith.

And so it was that around 5.30 p.m. on Thursday April 14th, the playwright left this succinct message on the actress' friend's answering machine: "Pen? –Pint. Guinness. Bukowski's."

The outcome of these four cryptic words is, of course, now a legendary footnote to British theatrical lore.

10. 1968. *'Chest Fever' –The Band. Black Chelsea Boots; Jeans; white Henley T shirt.*

After Collège de La Providence, I was obliged to return to the miserable Scottish hellschool for a couple of months to complete my University entrance exams, the dreaded GCE 'A' levels.

Happily, the authorities at the school decided that I was not an official student there, so could not take part in any school activities except for academic classes.

This 'punishment' was of course simply wonderful for me. No only did I not have to attend any assemblies, chapel, or any school sports, but I was prohibited from wearing the school uniform so could wear whatever I wanted, and grow my hair however I pleased.

My fellow 'official' students were mad with envy and a few seriously contemplated getting suspended to follow my course.

As for me, I did indeed attend classes, did my homework and otherwise did what I pleased. This included going to movies, playing golf, and taking bike rides down the coast. Without the school uniform, I was also able to frequent a pub a mile from the school without being detected.

The term flew by. I sat my 'A' levels, and returned home. A few weeks later, the results arrived. I had qualified for university entry but had decided to enroll in Art school instead. There was an excellent one in Kingston not far from where we lived and they accepted me. I was living at home so needed a car to get to Kingston every day. My mother agreed to lend me a few hundred quid, and I bought a nifty, used Mini Cooper. This enabled me to actually live wherever I ended up on any given evening, and I spent countless nights on friends' sofas or with one of a handful of girlfriends I developed at Art school. Every weekend, I'd return to do my laundry at home.

Though I made many friends, the art school crowd and I didn't fully gel. For the most part –and this is a giant generalization- they were less articulate and far less talkative than I, their talents, interests and ruminations being predominantly visual, not verbal. So we enjoyed one another's company listening to music, drinking beer and smoking pot. But I don't remember having long discussions outside of earnest deliberations on contemporary painters and what other students were working on. Art schools were supposed to be hatching grounds of political dissidents and anarchistic activists. No mine, not that year anyway. I went on a few protest marches but with my friend Steve and his girlfriend – a very opinionated Cambridge undergrad.

So although I generally enjoyed Kingston, I didn't really connect there. Also while my aesthetics, comprehension, appreciation and conceptual levels were on a par with my peers, I was less able to execute. Their drawing and painting talents were simply much better than mine. It would matter less –if at all- now, but in that pre-digital era, it was a significant disadvantage. I decided to leave after a year.

I certainly wasn't the only Kingston Art School student to decide to pursue another direction. And a week before the end of my final term there, another 'drop-out' was invited to come back with his trio and play at the annual summer 'ball.' To everyone's surprise and delight, ex-alumnae Eric Clapton returned with Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker to play an incredible two-hour set in the assembly hall. It was all the more notable as they were in the middle of their farewell tour.

11.1969. *'All Right Now' –Free. Outrageously bell-bottomed jeans; Granny (Henley) T shirt*

Doug drove his new/used 1967 Austin Healey 3000 Mk 11 across London towards the main road headed northeast. (The 'A' something. Only one 'M'otorway in the UK then.) The car had cost him a couple of thousand quid that he didn't have.

He had just dropped out of Kingston College of Art. A distant uncle whom he had last seen at his father's funeral had mentioned the possibility of a job with a local newspaper in northern Cambridgeshire. Doug pounced on it, and following an exchange of – on Doug's side- studiously crafted letters with the assistant editor of the Wisbech Dispatch and News, he had secured a barely remunerated apprenticeship.

He was confident that he would be writing for The Times or The Guardian within mere months, and reporting for the BBC soon after.

He had secured a room at a boarding house recommended by the assistant editor.

12. 1969. *'Superstition.'*: *Stevie Wonder. Flared Bib n' brace overalls; floral shirt.*

Brick, Edith. 1895-1970, Wife of Albert, mother of Jill, died in her sleep after a short illness. Edith grew up in Wisbech where she attended the local secondary modern. After school, she learned to type and worked for several local businesses. At the onset of WWI, Edith joined the Ministry of Agriculture and worked in their Cambridge office throughout the war. She met Albert in 1919 and they had daughter, Jill, one year later. From that time on, she stayed at home living off Albert's wages as a railway signalman. Jill left Wisbech in 1937 and emigrated to New Zealand. "She's lucky she went in her sleep." Said her husband Albert. "I was on the verge of strangling her with my bare hands several times. Fact is, she was one miserable old cow. She drove our daughter to the other side of the world and I wish I had followed her." Funeral will be Wednesday March 15th at St. Dunstan's Church on Oak street.

The above wasn't my first obituary for the Dispatch and News; I had written two or three in my first week. Perhaps because of them, the editor didn't read this one all the way through, trusting my 'professionalism' by then. But as soon as the paper hit the streets, the phone began to ring. While I had quoted Albert Brick faithfully and accurately, it seems that I shouldn't have.

The editor was forced to issue an apology to the readers –and to the Bricks- and felt obliged to offer me up as a sacrifice. That afternoon, I packed up the Healey and drove back to London.

13.1970. *'Get Back': The Beatles. 'Take Six' black suit; bold, blue and white striped shirt.*

Doug had recently read 'Playpower' by Oz Magazine co-founder, and political activist Richard Neville. It painted a happy picture of people working in media related industries including advertising.

Charred by his brief brush with journalism, Doug drove the Healey back to London, parked it outside his friend Steve's Hampstead flat, and set about finding a job in advertising.

With his customary lack of thorough investigation, he breezed through the Yellow Pages Advertising Agencies listing and wrote letters to the heads of personnel of the first twenty agencies plus J.Walter Thomson, the one agency he had heard of.

Two days later, he followed up with phone calls and –amazingly- got a couple of appointments. Suitably suited, he presented himself, and was offered a traineeship at an American owned agency called Erwin-Wasey adjacent to Paddington Station.

The head of personnel –a very charming woman, whom Doug managed to charm back- had asked him what branch of advertising appealed to him and in which department he wanted his traineeship.

Ad agencies have departments? Doug had no idea. He presumed that everyone just came to work and came up with ideas for ads. While he was pondering the question, the woman prompted him.

"Account management? Research? Traffic?"

Doug didn't like the sound of any of those.

"Media?...." Aha! "Yes; I think media would suit me –and me it.."

"Well that's marvelous. We have quite a lot of trouble finding people for that department so I think we'll be able to offer you something."

Trouble? Why would they have trouble finding people for the media department? Surely that was where they came up with ideas for the

media –TV, Magazines, Newspapers and so on- that’s exactly what Doug wanted to do, get paid to sit around writing funny ads.

True to his lack of preparation, Doug didn’t know anything about Erwin-Wasey. The nice personnel woman gave him a brief overview. The main clients were Coca-Cola, Goodyear Tires, some breakfast cereals and a bunch of cigarette brands.

She showed him around the offices and described the different departments as they walked through them.

Account Management was, as expected, staffed by serious looking executives in suits and ties. Research had a similar feel, though the people looked a little more like math teachers. The traffic department was more hectic, somewhat sloppy looking and manned by a rougher crew. People were shouting to one another, and wrangling large envelopes and boxes of film and photographs.

One floor up, they walked around the Media Department. And Doug’s warning bells went off. The people here were also wearing suits and ties. They were working away on large, squared-paper schedules entering X’s and O’s. Several were on the phone buying airtime from TV stations: A 30 second spot for Coca-Cola on Coronation Street next Thursday; two 15-second spots for Goodyear on the Evening News every Tuesday and Friday. Another suit was discussing a colour page ad in Woman and Woman’s Own magazines for Sovereign cigarettes. Holy crap. Was this what people in the Media department did? In that case, who actually did the ads? Who created the TV spots and the magazine ads?

Doug turned to the nice woman. “Have they already made the TV ads and so on?”

“That’s our next stop.” She replied.

They walked up one floor and the atmosphere was completely different. Instead of neat offices and suited execs, the space was wide open. The walls were covered with rough sketches, drawings,

storyboards and finished ads. Rock music was coming from huge speakers in the corner. Casually dressed guys with long hair and their attractive female counterparts were at drawing boards and typewriters, chatting and laughing with one another. There was a smell of musk and patchouli oil barely masking the smell of weed.

“And this, of course, is our Creative department. These are the people who come up with the ads.”

14.1971. *'Maggie May': Rod Stewart. Black leather bell-bottoms; blue button-down shirt; black mid length boots.*

I saw Caroline every few months after she had graciously taken my virginity. She made it clear that we weren't compatible enough to be serious boyfriend/girlfriend, but we enjoyed a good platonic relationship with physical benefits, thanks entirely to her.

I don't know how she learned, I was afraid to ask, but she taught me about sex and I was –am- forever grateful.

The second time we made out in Suffolk, she had asked me point blank: "Do you wank?"

A trick question, surely.

"Well I spend eight months of the year at an all boys boarding school so..."

"So you do. Right. And do you and your dorm friends have wanking competitions?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh come on, Doug. I have two older brothers."

"So why are you asking me, then?"

"The point of these competitions is to come as fast as possible, right?"

"Well, yes...."

"So if you going to impress your girlfriends, you have to unlearn that. You have to learn to wait to come until your partner has."

Easier said than done, as men through the ages know.

"And another thing. Do you like this?"

'This' as she now demonstrated, was taking my dick in her mouth, licking, sucking and rubbing it with her tongue in wonderfully gentle but firm fashion.

"Oh god, yes...." I replied.

"Well so do girls." She informed me. "So let's show you how it's done."

And Caroline taught me how to perform oral sex on her. She showed me exactly how to do what to each part of her lovely, moist genitals.

“But not all girls are the same. You have to experiment and explore and try different things. Don’t be afraid to ask. ‘Is this nice?’ ‘Show me how you like it. And another thing: nothing down there tastes particularly nice. But it’s mainly just salty or sweaty. If you ever taste anything sweet, pull out! Something’s not right. It’s the same for guys and girls; actually it’s worse for girls because guys don’t clean themselves nearly as well. And your come is like sour phlegm”

That year’s vacation in Suffolk was over a few days later and we all went our separate ways. Caroline lived in Yorkshire, so continuing our affair would have been difficult even if she had agreed to it.

But after I started work at the Ad Agency, she called me. She was coming down to London to start a career modeling. I invited her to share my room while she looked for a flat of her own and we enjoyed a delightful couple of weeks living together until she found a flat – perversely, I thought- the other side of London.

It was while she and I were co-habiting that I switched from the Media Department to Creative, empowered no doubt by having a very rewarding sex life.

And it was a few months later that my ‘career’ as a part-time inventor began.

15. 1971. *'Brown Sugar': Rolling Stones. Flared Jeans, Chelsea F.C. shirt, Black Converse Hi-tops*

One of the ad agency clients made and sold things like deodorant, shampoo and sunscreen. It wasn't a 'glamorous' account so being rather low on the Creative Department totem pole, I was often assigned its projects. One of my lazier efforts was for a headline for a dandruff shampoo, which had 'masked' its rather unpleasant medicated smell with a more powerful 'herbal' scent.

'TEGRIN TAKES THE POO OUT OF MEDICATED SHAMPOO.'

Apparently the client loved it, and when he was down in London for a meeting, he asked to meet me. I joined him and the obligatory, agency chaperone Account Exec. for lunch.

Having nothing to talk about, I asked how they had come up with the idea for Herbal Tegrin, expecting to hear a ramble about consumer research etc. etc. but surprisingly, the company stumbled on the product first, then launched it hoping that there was a large enough problem that this would solve.

That got me to thinking about what other hybrid products they could manufacture to 'solve' consumer problems.

A few weeks later, working on another one of their hair care lines, I wondered whether shampoo and conditioner –sold separately- could be combined into one. After all, the shampoo instructions suggested using it once, than rinsing and repeating, then rinsing again, applying conditioner, and leaving it to soak into the hair. Why not shampoo and conditioner in one? The shampoo would be the 'dominant' product the first time through, cleaning the hair; the conditioner would be the main functioning component the second time as the product soaked in.

There would be redundancies, certainly. But the marketing appeal of 'shampoo and conditioner all-in-one' seemed strong: time-saving (!) and innovative. I called the client up and suggested that we have lunch the next time he was in London.

Thus began my 'career' as an inventor. The shampoo/conditioner product was a massive success and as a result, every other hair care manufacturer immediately copied it. Unable to patent the combination, the company's profits from it leveled off as soon as competition stifled the initial buzz. I had taken the precaution of asking for a modest cut of whatever the product made and though I suspect they doctored the numbers, I made enough to buy a nice flat in Highgate, upgrade the Healey and put away something for rainy days.

16.1967. *'Big Boss Man': Grateful Dead. Black trousers; double breasted grey hound's-tooth jacket; pale blue button down shirt; black knitted tie.*

Doug's father was riddled with cancer. He had contracted it in the larynx two years prior, and had much of his throat including his vocal chords removed. He battled to learn to speak by belching air from his lungs and shaping his mouth. It sounded as painful as it must have felt. Just as he was becoming 'fluent', he discovered that the cancer had spread to his lungs and beyond. Weeks of chemotherapy and radiation merely weakened him and he was moved from the London hospital where he was being treated to a small local one to be kept 'comfortable' while he slowly died.

Doug was at home waiting to start Art School in Kingston; his older brother Fred was at home as he began a career in accounting; their mother was at home; and their German Shepherd was at home. Three of them visited Doug's father daily.

The increasing doses of morphine he was being given rendered him more agreeable than usual, and prone to fantastic reveries with which he entertained his family.

Early one morning, the phone rang. Doug's mother answered it and weepily came in to Doug's bedroom to tell him that the hospital had called: His father had died.

His mother went out to walk the dog as Doug and Fred ate breakfast and fought over the one black tie in the house. The phone rang again, and Doug answered it.

"Is your mother there?" inquired the head nurse from the hospital.

"She'll be back soon. Can I give her a message?"

There was a pause.

"Well....we have some rather bad news."

More bad news? What could be worse than the news they'd already had?

"Your father passed away in his sleep."

“Oh. Okay. Thank you. I’ll tell my mother.”

“We’re so sorry...”

Doug hung up and passed the ‘news’ on to Fred. They were perplexed: why was it so bad that he had died in his sleep? Wasn’t that the least traumatic way to go?

They told their mother when she returned with the dog and she, too, was mystified.

“Perhaps we’ll find out when we go over to the hospital.”

The hospital was barely a mile away so they walked.

The entrance to the hospital was also the way in to the token ER, which really functioned as a triage center to ‘staunch the bleeding’ so that patients could be moved on to the larger hospital a few miles away.

However this morning, there was a family in the ER waiting area.

They were distraught; variously crying, sobbing and sitting in blank-faced, shocked disbelief.

Doug, his mother and brother, quietly walked past them and went on up to his father’s room. There, they found the head nurse, a resident doctor and a couple of orderlies making his father look less like a corpse.

The head nurse –whom they had got to know quite well- gushed sympathy.

“We’re so sorry. We didn’t know; what a terrible coincidence...”

Doug et famille were still none the wiser.

Then it was explained to them. A man with exactly the same name as Doug’s father had been in a car crash overnight. He had been admitted to the ER, but had died in the early hours. The first call to Doug’s mother, first thing in the morning, had been someone erroneously informing them of the crash victim’s death. Later, the staff had gone in to Doug’s father’s room and found that he had passed in his sleep. That occasioned the second call, which Doug had received.

Meanwhile, none of the relatives of the crash victim had been informed of his death until they had been directed to the hospital by the police to find that their relative had been killed.

Later that morning Doug had an appointment to take his driving test. He went anyway, still wearing the black tie. When the examiner came into the waiting room, he noticed the black tie.

“Death in the family?” He asked disbelievingly.

Doug realized that it must be a common ploy. He removed the tie, but went on to pass the test anyway.

And the family dog celebrated the strange day by eating three steaks left to thaw on the kitchen table.

17. 2017. *'Rose of Erin': Joe Strummer. Distressed olive, linen shorts (Barney's) Navy Everlane T, slides.*

I'm sitting on West Wharf Beach in Madison CT. I live here right now. (In Madison, not on the beach.) A hundred yards away, the other side of the dunes, is the Madison Golf Course where some ten years ago, I played the best round of my life, shooting, one over par 73. Nowadays, I sometimes go up to Kate Hepburn's 9-hole track, Fenwick, in Old Saybrook and play with just a handful of clubs.

This morning, I'm power walking my weight back down to the +/-150 lbs. it's been for the last 15 years. So many numbers: 73, 9, 5, 150, 15, for someone who is numerically dyslexic and has had agida 'balancing the books' all his life.

I smoke a little pot after my 20-minute walk. It will calm my nerves (Caroline is on the warpath again,) give me an appetite for my lite breakfast and take me through until lunch, when I'll have a pint of beer –Big Cranky IPA, Stonycreek Brewery. This evening, Caroline will pour me a glass of wine while we watch the news, and I'll have another with dinner. After dinner and after I've walked Caroline's dog, Nigel, I'll have a whisky and water. Is that so much? (I don't actually care what you think!)

So yes, I'm back with Caroline for the moment. My second wife, Jenny, left 5 years ago (why is this chapter so full of numbers?) (More numbers:) 3 years ago, I got around to sell our house outside Boston. I made about 500K on the house, and thought that would be plenty to rent a small place to 'retire' in.

I started looking in the Connecticut Shoreline area, halfway closer to my daughter, Julia in Brooklyn. In no time, I discovered that my old – flame? - Caroline had ended up here, taking a very different route, for which there's no time now. Naturally we hooked up and naturally we're living together. Naturally she still thinks, "We aren't compatible enough to be serious boyfriend/girlfriend." But I fill a couple of holes in her life including walking her dog, helping take care of her house, and generally keeping her company: you rarely cook anything special for

yourself, you often make a sublime effort for you and another person. Yes, and sometimes other holes with which Caroline and I are intimately familiar.

Madison has a changing demographic. In winter, it's just retired conservatives with year round homes a mile or so from the water, young couples and blue collar workers a little farther in, past the Northeast corridor rail tracks and I 95.

In summer, it's full of families from New York and Boston and itinerant renters from everywhere. The prices at the (deplorable) Stop and Shop supermarket and the few restaurants seem to maintain their summer highs. Same with the three fish markets in the area. I'll be going to the Guilford one for a couple of salmon steaks to grill later this morning. Hopefully my car will start and go without incident. After years of driving increasingly maintenance free, high-powered machines with automatic transmission and parking assist screens, I've chosen to regress to a manual stick shift beast whose tires, oil and other fluids I also have to take care of manually. It's an old 3 series Bimmer and it has its moods. But when it's in a good mood, it's great fun.

In some respects the car mirrors me: Old but unwilling to act it. I should hang out at Brother Mike's at lunch with the other Madison geezers. But they don't engage me. They repeat the sports and weather information they get from the TV; they agree with the logic of many 'liberal' tenets, but end up –I'm certain- of actually voting for the tired, rich, white Republicans they've always felt safe with. And there's nowhere for me to find my own kind, not that I want an echo chamber.

My illustrator/designer Pierre who lives in Old Saybrook ten miles away, is the closest thing to a friend I have here (excepting Caroline.) Pierre visualizes my inventions, cartoons, movie outlines and occasional ad concepts. He is enormously talented, combining a draftsman's precision with a wild, edgy, comic strip style. I had worked with him years ago in NYC and was pleased to find him out to pasture in CT. But Pierre won't join me for pub lunches. He regards

imbibing as a distraction, and chooses to eat alone. He will certainly converse and opine, but usually before and after we've met to discuss a project at the Clinton public library. I wonder if I'm perceived to be an eccentric?

18. 1975. *'Cocaine': Eric Clapton. Jeans; T-shirt; white, hi-top Converse sneakers.*

Doug's Highgate flat was a stunning, glassed eerie perched over panoramic views of Hampstead Heath. His downstairs neighbors were a bunch of musicians including Hot Chocolate front man Errol Brown, and two Scotsmen –Hamish and Onnie- who were busy forming The Average White Band.

Doug continued his ad agency career, but found more and more reasons to work from home. He worked fast and while his AD's were visualizing their concepts Doug, filled the time coming up with cartoons. Doug would illustrate these himself, and soon started getting them published in the increasing number of independent publications springing up on the fringes in London and a few college towns outside. He met and spent time with TV personality, media pundit and jazz singer George Melly and his wife Di, who introduced him to some of their celebrity friends.

His best friend Steve got a job as manager at a burgeoning, new record label and Doug enjoyed parties at rock stars' houses in the Surrey woods. He indulged in a variety of hallucinogenics with friends. He dated girls in the casual ways of the times, managing to avoid falling in love, yet enjoying mutually rewarding companionship and sex. Usually. Life was good.

Steve's job often took him to New York and one rather inebriated night, Doug and Steve's girlfriend Sally decided to fly over and surprise Steve who was working there. They left early in the morning and arrived at JFK airport at midday. Steve was busy with meetings all day so Doug and Sally went down to the village and hung out in a couple of pubs off Washington Square. They had dinner with Steve, and then flew back to London. It was a ridiculously expensive way to pass a stupidly short amount of time, but it resulted in Doug catching the NY bug.

Later that year –in fact on December 31st- Doug went with Steve and Sally to Eric Clapton's country house to celebrate new year's eve. An outlandish and extraordinarily indulgent evening culminated in the dozens of people there being herded out to encircle the elaborate fountain in the middle of the front drive.

As a preposterous, 1930's BBC version of Auld Lang Syne was played, Who drummer Keith Moon climbed to the top of the fountain statue and conducted the crowd. Later, as the sun rose, Doug, Steve and Sally drove back to London then flew to New York. This time, Doug had his bags with him, having previously sub-let his flat.

19.1995. *'Sultans of Swing': Dire Straits. Denim cut-offs; white Henley; leather jacket; white, low-top, Converse sneakers.*

We were in sweltering Minneapolis filming some commercials for a fast-food brand. (It really doesn't matter which.) The commercials consisted of a dozen or so scenes of people doing something vaguely healthy that anyone could do. These scenes –or vignettes, in the vernacular- would be edited together to a piece of high-paced rock music. The end vignettes would show the happy, healthy twentysomethings eating signature crap at the fast-food joint.

This style of commercial was called 'lifestyle' in the industry. It was a creative tactic employed when the clients weren't buying anything wittier or more original. Lifestyle spots were enormously boring to produce. They required hours –days- of pre-production including location scouting, props, casting, wardrobe etc. etc. for each +/-: 2 second scene. As a result, the cost of a: 30-second spot was disproportionately high. As a result, the agency and production company had to cut corners. As a result, they were shooting in the Midwest to avoid the higher LA travel and hotel costs.

The first of four set-ups we were shooting on this day involved a group of cyclists on a sunrise run. The shot would be of them cresting a hill in a deserted city street. A bunch of pigeons would fly up and out of their way. That was it. And for this, a crew of about 50, with all the necessary support vehicles was assembled. I was hanging around the chuck truck unenthusiastically ingesting weak coffee and a vast breakfast burrito with the assistant line producer with whom I seemed to have spent the previous night.

The director, DP, and other more active crew members were setting up the shot about 100 yards away. The DP was frantically checking the sunrise status, as they wanted the shot to capture Mr. Sun just clipping the horizon, backlighting the cyclists and the pigeons. Timing was critical, but absolutely out of my hands.

The pigeons had been kept for two days in crates in the pigeon wrangler's house. They were extremely hungry if not downright starved, so that when the time was right, pigeon food (?) would be put

down exactly where the director wanted the birds to be when the cyclists suddenly came into view. This subterfuge was essential to prevent the pigeons from just flying away when the crates were opened.

At about 5:45 central time, everything was deemed to be ready: the camera rig and crew had checked their light readings and focus points; the cyclists had done several rehearsal runs and been told precisely where each was to go; the grips had hosed down the street to give the scene another level of visual magic, slightly mirroring the cyclists, the sunrise and the pigeons as the action unfolded; the client and agency peeps (like me) had all had a preview of the shot and signed off on it. And I had finished my burrito and a subsequently satisfactory tomtit in the wardrobe and make-up Winnebago.

The cyclists on the other side of the hill were ready, we heard on the camera PA's walkie; the pigeon food had been placed between the camera and where the bikes would come. The moment came, and the bird wrangler opened the crates. A couple of dozen pigeons emerged and went straight to the piles of food. Perfect.

“OK; camera.”

“Speed.”

“Cue the bikes.”

“Action cyclists!”

The sun, oblivious to its cue began to cut the horizon, the whir of racing bikes could be heard as they sped towards the pigeons. And just as they crested the hill and were about to reach the birds, we anticipated a glorious roil of wings merging with the sunrise as the pigeons flapped up and out of the way.

The first five or six cyclists rode right through and over the birds, the next wave of bikes tried desperately to avoid the mess of feathers, blood and avian carcasses, but skidded on the detritus and crashed, causing yet more carnage. It was a horrible disastrous scene. After the initial sounds of bird cries, cyclist yells, and metallic screeching, there was a sickening silence.

“Cut.” Said the director.

Obviously –after the fact- it was determined that the hungry pigeons were far too engrossed with their food to care about the bikes.

Over dinner that evening, the Assistant Director told a funny shoot story to lighten the somber mood.

AD Kevin's story.

I was AD'ing a music video last year for a new, hot rapper (Lil'Wayne, it turns out.) The video consisted of the rapper and his band performing his new song in a nightclub.

The location was an East LA club with shiny, black, vinyl walls all around and behind the stage and dance floor. The Director wanted to light the set very dramatically, then wet the walls down to reflect and amplify the lighting. There were several dozen local extras hired to dance in the foreground, but the casting agent had hired two principle female dancers from San Jose to be featured closer to the band. (Apparently San Jose is known for it rich pool of black, female, dancing talent.)

As with any shoot, the first shot was to be the 'master,' showing the whole club, the dancers and the band. Later on, the director would shoot close-ups. The editor would determine how to cut the options together in postproduction.

It took a couple of hours to set up the lighting and the props, to place the band members and the dancers. Many rehearsals were done. One of the last things before each take would be for the grips to wet the club walls. (There were powerful, bright lights aimed at the walls and they dried the water very quickly.) The grips had three high-pressure fire hoses; they had to douse the walls, and then get themselves and the hoses out of the shot just as the action started.

So the rehearsals had all been done; the band, the dancers and the 'principle' dancers all had their choreography down pat. The lights went on, I cued the grips to hose the walls, then the music, then the Director called "Action!"

Looking through the camera, he saw that the nozzle of one of the hoses was just in the shot, so he shouted out, "Lose the hose! Lose the hose!"

Immediately, several grips ran into the shot, grabbed the two principle dancers, and pulled them out of the shot....

20. 1985. *'Lay Down Sally': Eric Clapton. White jeans; blue, pin-striped blazer (cuffed); blue, low-cut, Converse Jack Purcell's.*

Caroline needed a favor.

She and I had both been in New York for over a year, but I had only seen her a few times. Life was good for my fair weather, 'sometimes' girlfriend. She went by the name 'Lines,' and her modeling career was flourishing –I often saw her face in magazines and billboards- and she clearly took advantage of the high life it enabled. So I was surprised, pleasantly, when she called to suggest that we get together for dinner.

She met me at the Tribeca loft for which I had parlayed the London flat a few years earlier. We had a drink on the terrace then walked across West Broadway to The Odeon. Idle chitchat about whom she had seen at Studio 54 and how 'all the girls' did blow to stay slim accompanied our appetizers, and then the main course came.

"I've got a sort of proposition for you." Announced Caroline.

"A proposition?"

"More like a proposal, atch. You've got a green card, right?"

I had acquired one with the help of the ad agency that I had worked for when I first came to New York. Their attorneys had amazingly convinced the immigration authorities that I was uniquely qualified to do something few Americans could: write commercials!

"Ye-es."

"And if you married someone, she could get one too."

"I believe so. But it has to be a legit marriage. They interview both people and ask them incredibly intimate questions to ensure that it's not an arranged thing."

"Yeah, yeah. Right. Well that's the thing. You and I know one another quite intimately; we could pull it off..."

"I don't know. I think we would actually have to live together to know what toothpaste each of us uses, which side of the bed we sleep on. And we'd probably need to have a joint bank account..."

“Oh sure. Details though...”

“So you are proposing to me, then, Caroline...”

“Um. Well, yeah. I suppose. Thing is, I really need a green card. My work permit extensions are nearly up, and I’ve got a huge opportunity to be the spokesperson for a major cosmetics company...”

“Which one?”

“I can’t really say.”

“Well if I don’t know details about my wife’s work, then they won’t believe the marriage...”

“Oh ok, ok. Don’t be a dick. I’ll tell you everything. But the joint back account will just be a front, right? I mean we don’t have to share our real money....?”

“Oh I don’t think you’re entering this in the right spirit, Mrs. King.”

“Look. We’ll live together for as long as it takes, and you’ll get amazing benefits if you get my drift. Come on; you’re my best friend. I’d do the same for you....”

And so the following week, Caroline moved in.

We had discussed a few more details. Like how long we would be married (until she got her green card.) Whom we would tell (our closest friends, but not family.) How we would live (as if we were married; eating together, spending evenings and weekends together, except where work prevented.) Caroline also stipulated that we should under no circumstances fall in love, either with one another, or with anyone else. (I opined that was easy to stipulate, but not so simple to follow: The heart wants what the heart wants.) In any case we also agreed that we should both be monogamous while we were married to thwart any nosey immigration sleuths and to help avoid falling in love with anyone else.

As for the actual timeline, Caroline’s immigration lawyer told us that once married, we could petition for her green card. And that it would probably be about 3 months before our first interview. So we were to be ‘hitched’ for at least 3 months: certainly long enough to learn one another’s preferred toothpaste brand.

21.1989. *'I Won't Back Down': Tom Petty. Jeans; white T-shirt; blue, button down shirt (unbuttoned.)*

Jenny could hardly contain herself. Tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. She looked tired but radiant. She was suckling her two-hour old baby.

"Isn't she perfect? I'm so in love with her. She just so...so..."

"Perfect."

"Exactly! Don't you think so?"

"She's a bit yellow...."

"That's just a little jaundice. Dr. Eckstein says it's very common. She'll lose that in a few hours."

"She is very pretty..."

"Right? I know! I can't get over how much I love her. Don't you love her?"

"Of course!"

But I didn't. She was a very pretty, very little baby. I felt nothing more than that, even though she was my baby. And it bothered me that I didn't love her. Was there something wrong with me? Would I be a lousy father? Fact is (I now know,) mothers have several months to pre-bond with their babies before they meet. It would take me the same several months to fall in love. Perhaps I would always be catching up, always some nine months behind in the depth of my love for Julia.

But I was in love with Jenny. I had fallen for her four years before, soon after Caroline and I got married. And for several months -while Caroline was waiting for her green card- I had been unable to act on my feelings. Jenny worked in a high-end food store/catering business a block from my loft. Caroline and I had met her when we went in to the store to get our weekend breakfast pastries. Jenny occasionally worked behind the counter to help out. She was funny and fresh and very pretty. She and Caroline would tease me about my pathological dislike for cheese, often luring me to eat some cheesy Danish, claiming its filling was marzipan or whipped cream.

When Caroline's green card came through, she triggered the 'outta here' clause in our marriage. I was sorry to lose her –she was a thoroughly entertaining companion, and the nuptial benefits were superb- but I hadn't fallen in love with her.

I started dating Jenny soon after, and Julia came along a year later.

Chemistry was always my worst subject at school and cooking is a form of chemistry. I can follow a recipe and come up with passable results, but Jenny had the instinctive knack of being able to create and improvise from scratch.

She continued working at the food store and experimenting with things up until Julia's birth. The store's forte was breakfast/brunch. Jenny originated several menu items, and one day, created a croissant/bagel hybrid. It was round with a hole in the middle, had the soft, flakey outside of a croissant but a much firmer inside. It was more satisfying than a croissant, and tastier than a bagel. It made a great base for eggs and bacon, smoked salmon even just butter and preserves.

The storeowner wanted to call it the 'Cragel' but I thought 'Broissant' was a catchier, more appetizing name.

Jenny made them fresh everyday, managed to perfect a version which could be frozen. We copyrighted the word 'Broissant' and trademarked 'Jenny's Broissants.'

Just after Julia's birth, Jenny heard from General Mills that they wanted to buy 'Jenny's Broissants' and start mass marketing them.

22.1990. *'The Waiting': Linda Rondstadt. Light grey linen suit; dark blue button down shirt; white low-cut converse sneakers.*

Doug had very specific and very picky travel demands. When he was working for various ad agencies in NY and Boston, he made a point to befriend the in-house travel agents. He would charm them, and impress them with his knowledge of airlines and hotels. They would then do their best to find him the best flights on the airlines he preferred and finagle upgrades. He rarely flew in coach, never on flights of 5 hours or longer.

When he checked into a hotel, he would pull out the charm machine with the check-in clerks and request a corner room on the concierge level. Whether he got one or not, he would thank them enormously and go up to the assigned room. Unless it was particularly satisfactory, he would come back down with his case(s) and explain why it wasn't what he had hoped for. Inevitably the replacement room would be to his liking.

One airline he had special loathing for was NorthWest. In the mid '80's he had worked for two years on the 3M business. The company's HQ is in St. Paul MN and it was almost impossible to avoid NorthWest whose hub was Minneapolis/St. Paul. Even in first class, the airline rarely failed to disappoint, offering poor equipment, inferior service, rude personnel, inedible food or all four.

Now he found himself again with business in the twin cities, this time with General Mills. While Jenny stayed in NY with the infant Julia, Doug embarked on a series of meetings with the General Mills' product and marketing people to determine the future of 'Jenny's Broissants.'

The food giant had proscribed methods, and were used to developing new products in-house. Rarely did it buy an outside concept, as they had with JB's. Never had it dealt with someone with such very clear, professional, marketing ideas and opinions as Doug.

He was able to punch through the initial executive levels, politely rejecting their suggestions, until he got to meet with the C-suite people. But that took three trips to Minneapolis.

Finally he flew up for the discussions that would count.

Doug flew up in the early afternoon and stayed at the St. Paul Hotel, a comfy, wood-paneled Inn with a decent restaurant. He had a quick run, then chase an Old Fashioned in the bar with a couple of glasses of Chateaufort du Pape and a medium-rare steak for dinner.

“So Mr. King...”

“Doug.”

“---Doug; you're married to Jenny and empowered to represent her?”

“Yes.”

“And we understand you have specific ideas about how we might market ‘Jenny’s Broissants’...”

“We do. But we're open to any other good ideas, I just haven't heard them yet.”

The three junior marketing execs winced.

“So how would you suggest we market the product?”

“I wouldn't simply launch them with mass advertising. I think a slower, market-by-market roll out, with experiential events needs to be done to educate people about how to use them, and to create an appropriately culinary buzz. I would partner with high-end restaurants and food stores to do sampling events. I would limit distribution to begin with, to create demand in excess of supply.”

The senior suits were interested.

“I would spend heavily on PR, not on traditional advertising, until these high end stores hit saturation, and roll-out to mass outlets can take full advantage of pent-up demand.”

“And you would use your wife –Jenny- as the ‘celebrity’ pitch man?”

“She would be very good at it. She's an excellent chef; she's completely familiar with the product, and comfortably capable of

chatting with people while she prepares dishes with the Broissant. Having the creator of the Broissant introducing it will enchant people and help warrant premium pricing.”

One of the minions piped up:

“Does she know what a lot of work will be involved? She could be on the road for weeks, months, working different places every day.”

“She is hugely energetic and passionate about her Broissants. She will be fantastic.”

And so it was agreed. Jenny would spend the next year travelling across the country introducing ‘Jenny’s Broissants.’

23. 2017. *'Happy': The Rolling Stones. Charcoal, long-sleeve Henley, Black jeans, black hi-top sneakers.*

Purely by chance, I was in Myers of Keswick, the excellent home from home grocery for Brits. This charming, funky, little store has been a West Village icon for years. It's where we go for real Mars bars, mushy peas, Branson pickle and dozens of other quirky Brit food items that for some reason, American stores don't stock. They also make their own pork and Veal & ham pies. Yummy.

Back in NY for a week shooting, I was staying at a fashionable, very cramped boutique hotel in the Lower Eastside. A visit one evening to Myers was probable; what was possible was bumping into a few British celebrities also getting their supplies. One frequent shopper in this category is the amazing Keef.

I think he was debating whether to buy Bovril or Marmite; perhaps he was looking at the selection of Shipham's meat pastes and remembering schoolboy teas back at home.

"I usually got the chicken or veal paste on my sarnies; one day my mum sprung for the crab paste. It tasted like cat food, but since I knew it was 'special' and cost more, I pretended to like it. Since then, I've loved it. What do you think about boxing day?"

Keith looked at me for a moment.

"Yeah. I dunno. I usually got beans on toast or sardines."

"Mm. So what about boxing day? Are you a fan?"

"Love boxing day. Turkey leftovers were always better than the Christmas turkey."

"I'm making an animated movie about boxing day. I need someone to narrate it. We were going to ask Steven Fry or Michael Caine...but you'd be great. Any interest?"

"What is it? A documentary?..."

"No. It's a five-minute, animated story about a kid who realizes that his family got too much stuff at Christmas, and he wants to give some

to people who need it. It's kind of an updated allegory that illustrates the spirit of Boxing Day. It'll be funny but, you know, with a point....I've written the narration kind of like 'The Night Before Christmas.' It starts off, 'T'was the day after Christmas and Oh, what a noise, as kids of all ages played with new toys...." I blurted the elevator pitch at the world's best and best-known rhythm guitarist.

Silence.

"Sorry. I shouldn't have pounced on you like that with it."

"Nah, nah. Sounds like a good idea...."

"Yeah; people are very interested in. May I send you the script? Like I said, you'd be a brilliant choice for the narrator."

"Mmm. Ok. Uh...can you send it to my manager?"

"Of course."

24.1991. *'Hideaway': John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Blue T-shirt; pale grey shorts; sneakers.*

At the start of her 'tour' Jenny called home every day, sometimes twice a day. She spoke at Julia for a few minutes, and then regaled Doug with details of the demonstrations.

"So we went to a diner in the morning. Kinda typical mid-west, but nice, y'know?"

"Mmm."

"The people who ran the diner didn't think their regulars would be at all interested in Broissants, but we served them toasted and buttered with peoples' eggs and bacon and stuff, and they were very popular..."

"Oh great!"

"Yeah! So Larry (the General Mills brand manager who was chaperoning Jenny across the country) gave them a case, and asked the diner owner to let him know how well they sold after we left."

"Yeah. They've been selling quite well wherever you've been so far..."

"I know. Larry says if places order another case, then we'll know they have legs.."

"Yeah. I read the local paper stories he sent me yesterday. All good PR."

"Yeah. So what's new with Julia? I really miss her. What's she up to?"

"Nothing new since yesterday! She woke up about 5:00 this morning and started singing in bed so we've been up since then. Betty (the fantastic babysitter who came daily so that Doug could work) said she crashed while they were in the park and slept for about an hour in the stroller. So we're all out of sync time wise."

"Oh my god. Why did you get her up at 5:00? Let her stay in bed if she's happy until 6:30..."

"I know. But after ten minutes of 'The Itsy Bitsy Spider', I was wide awake, too."

And so on.

Jenny's agreement with GM was that she would be 'on the road' for 10 days, then they'd fly her home for 5 days. Doug missed Jenny,

and was very happy when she was back. She would take over all baby duties and Doug enjoyed the break. And then she'd go back on the road. The New Orleans market next. Julia adapted seamlessly to the back and forth between her parent/caregivers, showing early signs of the easygoing nature she would display all her life.

New Orleans, being a culinary hot spot, would be an important test of Broissants. Accordingly, Larry and his team had arranged a particularly busy schedule for Jenny that included demonstrations and sampling in restaurants, food shops and a couple of TV stations. She was accordingly stretched, and called home less often, but when she returned the following week, Doug thought he noticed a slight change in her demeanor. Still delighted to be back with Julia, but a little cool towards Doug. The love making which typified her returns seemed more rote, and less frequent. She complained of some ache or other.

And then she was off again, to the west coast: LA and San Francisco. She would be gone for two weeks before returning cross-country.

It didn't take much for Doug to be suspicious. And sure enough, after a 'fantastically successful' week in the Bay area, Jenny was back and immediately began 'discussions' with Doug.

25.1996. *'Alone Again Or': Love. Double-breasted, navy jacket; blue and white striped shirt; jeans.*

I was on the Delta Shuttle from LaGuardia to Logan, en route to a job interview at a hot, creative Boston ad agency. The plane was nearly empty so the attendants were happy to give me a double bloody mary. I'm not a nervous flier, but I get bored quickly and easily. A drink or two and music in my headphones help the time fly, too.

Jenny and I had been cohabiting platonically for five years as we raised Julia. We had maximized the time apart from one another, taking every gig that required one of us to be out of town, so as to give the other space.

She had her boyfriends –Larry didn't last more than a few months– and I had my girlfriends. We agreed to keep Julia in the dark about our unconventional status, and strongly agreed on the rules and values we should raise her with. It seemed to work out: Julia's pre-school teachers, pediatrician, and baby sitters concurred that she seemed well-adjusted, happy, healthy and generally un-fucked up. Her maternal grand parents also lived in NY and she spent a fair amount of time with them. We never told them that we were living together apart. It just wasn't necessary.

Though the loft was paid up –no mortgage– it required maintenance fees, taxes and so on, which increased in proportion to the increased fashionability of Tribeca. Our neighbors, who had originally consisted of a motley collection of artists and media workers, had slowly emigrated to Brooklyn and been replaced by Wall Street types. My freelance fees and occasional invention royalties were getting stretched, and 'Jenny's Broissants' had run their course. Julia's Tribeca pre-school fees were consistent with her fellow students' parents' fiscal levels: Eric Bogosian, Eddie Adams, Harvey Keitel and a lesser Kennedy all had toddlers toddling with Julia. I had to find a new, more permanent income.

A film editor friend and her husband had recently moved from NYC to Boston and called to say that the ad agency with which they had a

close connection had just won the VW car account, a huge and prestigious piece of business. Did I want to move up and work there?

I took a cab from Logan to the Downtown Crossing part of Boston. Both the taxi and the district –Boston’s Times Square equivalent– were disgusting. My appointment at Arnold Advertising was at noon.

“What do you know about car advertising?” Asked Len, the Executive Creative Director?

“It’s terrible. Mindless, tasteless, unimaginative retail shite.” I replied.

“Exactly. None of the big companies are going to break that mold, but VW is in a do-or-die place. The Germans are going to abandon the US market in a year if things don’t pick up. The domestic clients have no idea what to do, so we can do what we like.”

“Well that sounds like a great blank slate. What are you going to fill it with?”

Len showed me half a dozen storyboards. The ads were funny, edgy, and smart. They had a little to do with the cars and a lot to do with the attitude of the Gen X’ers who drove them.

“This is the campaign they bought.” He told me.

“Well they’re great. So long as you don’t fuck up the production, and so long as the client doesn’t get cold feet, you’ll win lots of awards and may even boost sales a little. But if you’ve got an approved campaign all ready, why do you need me?”

“We don’t. At least not for VW. The problem is our other clients. They all know that we put our best people on the VW business; now they all want the same teams on their business. I can’t do that, but I can tell them that I’ve brought in a high-powered Brit to work with them.”

“Aha. Good solution. For you, at least.”

“Good for you, too. They’ll all be open to fresh ideas; they’ll all want new work to show their friends what the VW agency did for them...”

“Well that sounds like a tall and very expensive order.”

I flew back on the Shuttle that evening and ordered a very large Old Fashioned to celebrate my job offer and bookend the Bloody Mary.

Coincidentally, the crew was the same as the morning's and I shared a cab from LaGuardia with two very attractive attendants.

26. 1988. *'Goin' Back': The Byrds. Black and white hooped T-shirt; Jeans; Black high-top Converse sneakers.*

I grew up on 'Desert Island Discs' a BBC radio show that invited a different celebrity each week to list the records and books they would want with them if marooned. We play a similar game, adding movies to the tropical Island cache.

My first choice movie always generates ubiquitous agreement: 'The Princess Bride' is a timeless gem. Written by William Golding, it was produced and directed by Rob Reiner with a perfect cast and cameos. Cary Elwes, Robin Wright, Mandy Patinkin, Chris Sarandon, Wallace Shawn, Andre the Giant and Christopher Guest do the heavy lifting, Billy Crystal, Carol Kane, Peter Cook, Peter Falk and Fred Savage provide inspired support.

This is my Andre the Giant story.

Shortly before the release of 'The Princess Bride', I backed into an otherwise forgettable freelance job. I was asked to write and produce a retro ad campaign for Honeycomb cereal. The campaign pre-existed as 'The Honeycomb Hideout.' A formulaic, cookie cutter script featured a few kids in a backyard tree house eating the sugar-saturated cereal. Some large, threatening character(s) would try to steal their cereal citing its big size and taste. I stuck to the formula, merely adding a robot to the cast to update it.

The first spot we produced featured a group of hell's angels as the bad guys. In postproduction, I was trying to get the voice of the robot right. My engineer couldn't find the right combination of compression and distortion, so I went into the booth myself and recorded the lines: 'Big taste, Honeycomb, big taste...'

And so the spot ran.

It was apparently successful so the uninspired clients asked for a pool-out. I suggested we ask Andre to be the big, bad guy. And he agreed. On a brisk spring morning in Rye Playland, we set up the

shoot. When it came time for Andre to run his line ('...A big, hungry giant, hungry for a big cereal...') he seemed fascinated by the robot.

Not having much –if any- movement to accomplish, the robot costume was empty at this point. (It could, and did, accommodate a 'little person' inside when movement was necessary.) Andre ran his lines a few times, but was perplexed that the robot didn't respond. To placate him, we put a small speaker inside the robot, and I proceeded to deliver its line each time Andre spoke his. Andre was duly satisfied.

I will never know whether he thought the robot was inhabited, or even 'real'. His agent who chaperoned him on the set was an appropriately protective woman. She kept him in his trailer when not performing and he wasn't particularly communicative anyway. But I went to thank him after we wrapped him, and he regarded me with suspicion. Did he recognize the robot's metallic voice in mine?

Andre died of complications from gigantism a few years later. Thanks to my cameo, I was able to join SAG and thereafter earn a few bucks doing voice overs and narration.

Here's our Honeycomb commercial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4Vd6rv58gA>

27.1997. *'Tubthumping': Chumbawumba. Light grey khakis; black Polo shirt; black & white FootJoy Classics.*

For six months after joining Arnold, Doug rented a studio on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston's Back Bay. He left Boston on Friday after work and drove down to Tribeca. He spent the weekend with Julia and –sometimes- Jenny then drove back to Boston on Sunday evening.

Weather permitting, it was a relatively easy commute. It took just over 3 hours and he got 6-hour audio books to listen to from the Boston Public Library.

But it wasn't a permanent solution.

Jenny seemed to be more amenable to his presence and of course Julia was thrilled to see her dad every weekend. The loft had increased in value about 500% so that it seemed a good time to sell even though it was such a spectacular place. Just over 2,000 square feet with 11 foot ceilings and an adjacent, private 500 sq. ft. roof deck, accessible through French doors, it had now evolved from its original, completely open, raw space to have two enclosed bedrooms at one end, a still open living space divided by furniture into an 'office' area, a living 'area', a dining 'area and a kitchen; then a huge, walk-through closet and a spacious bathroom.

There was ample room for a ping-pong table and a model train layout in the main area either of which could simply lean up against the roughly painted brick wall when not in use.

The public areas of the building had been remodeled and reapointed several times by each generation of co-op boards. The friendly, amenable super remained.

Since the loft still belonged to Doug, he could make the call. But he deferred to Jenny. Eventually she decided to sell it and to move her and Julia up to Massachusetts. Doug spent every evening that spring looking at different towns within 20 minutes of Boston. He decided that the Metro-West area had the best options including good

schools, and when Jenny and Julia came up one weekend, Doug sold them on a small rural town 10 minutes off the Mass Pike.

Meanwhile he had been working on several ad accounts with varying degrees of success. One such was a major golf equipment company. Doug hadn't played a lot of golf over the years, but had maintained an up to date set of clubs, and could brush off the rust quite easily. Challenged with impressing the company's marketing people that he 'knew' the game, he broke 80 at one of their preferred tracks while keeping up a running discussion about the PGA tour.

This resulted in an ad campaign that was to last 7 years and win numerous 'Best of' advertising and marketing awards. Every year they shot 6 to 10 spots over a few days with the top Pro golfers. Doug got to meet and become friendly with Adam Scott, Ernie Els, Justin Leonard, Phil Mickelson, Davis Love 111, Jesper Parnevick, Lee Westwood, Darren Clarke, Ian Poulter and Vijay Singh among others. He enjoyed an endless supply of free equipment, and played frequently enough to lower his handicap to 7.

The golf spots were filmed in the US whenever and wherever the pros were available: Usually LA, Atlanta, or Orlando.

Ads for other clients were shot overseas to circumvent expensive union talent costs. Doug got to shoot in Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Stockholm and Scotland. His frequent travels probably ensured Jenny's relative content with the arrangement and Julia got to enjoy a straight shot through grade schools.

In 2004, his daughter graduated high school and proceeded to NYU, her first choice, to pursue a degree in the economics, culture and practice of film/video production.

28. 2017. *'Mr. Brightside': The Killers. Black hoodie; graphite jeans; black suede chukkas.*

"I dunno, man. The bit where the kid walks by the shelter seems kinda forced."

Keith was lounging in the sound studio, cigarette in mouth, whisky at hand. He had agreed to narrate my Boxing Day video, or at least to give it a go. The agreement was that he could rescind his agreement at any time if he didn't like what he had done. Quite fair enough. We had arranged a studio –Keith's choice- and an engineer –a friend of Keith's. Keith had brought along a very attractive woman whom he introduced as one of his agent/managers. I had brought along my illustrator, Pierre.

"I completely agree. I've always had a problem with that bit of the story." Chimed in Pierre, who, to my knowledge had never had a problem with it and had meticulously illustrated those, and all the frames for the storyboard.

"Well we need a motivating reason for Wilby to box his toys and donate them." I replied.

"I dunno," Keith again. "He could just decide that he had too much stuff, and other kids would appreciate it. That way you don't have to show the poor people. It's a kinda bummer anyway. He could decide that everyone there has too much stuff, and they could all box up what they don't need. That way the frenzy they show opening and playing with their new stuff can be matched by a similar frenzy as they box stuff up to donate it."

"I like it!" Said Pierre. (He had behaved obsequiously to Keith and his agent all morning.)

"Well I'd have to rewrite it quite significantly..." I said. "Not sure how long it would take."

“Take your time, man.” Said Keith. We’ve got the studio all day. I wanna lay down a couple of tracks anyway.”

So I tucked myself and my laptop into a snug corner of the engineer’s lounge and started tapping away. Keith went into the studio and started strumming away, and Pierre got out his oversized sketchpad and started doodling away.

29. 2018. *'Foundations': Kate Nash. Very tight Lucky Strike jeans; David Sheldrick Foundation T shirt; Keds.*

I know people's types. I knew the first time Doug and I saw Jenny that she was his type. After a few weeks, I knew that he wasn't exactly her type, but that if she was adaptable, he could grow on her. I guess he did, but then they grew apart. God knows why. Thankfully they're both basically decent people so they could mitigate their differences gracefully and continue to raise Julia.

I know my type. But I've never met him. See, he's gonna be somewhat schitzo: part kind, decent –that word again- and generous; part tough, selfish, and nasty.

God knows I wish I could settle on the part of me that's just attracted to the decent type. But however I try, I eventually need a break from all that fucking 'goodness', and a walk on the dark side: Someone mean and self-centered. Not a complete bastard, certainly not a viscous prick; just the type you fantasize about in the dark when you want a thrill. A bit of danger. No, not danger, perhaps an edge.

The first time I met Dougie all those years ago, I liked him. But I wasn't totally attracted to him. He and his friends were fun in the pub; they drank beers and played darts –badly- and pinball. They bought me and my girlfriend Debbie drinks, then took us up on the dunes to smoke pot. I got paired with Doug 'cos Deb really fancied his mate Steve. Doug and me snogged and drank rum 'n cokes from a thermos. They took us there again a few nights later, same deal. And it became a regular thing. I suppose we became boyfriend/girlfriend more or less to keep Deb and Steve company. I wasn't a virgin, but I knew Doug was hot for me. So I decided, 'what the hell.'

He had no clue, but he was considerate. So I showed him how. Gave him a few tips. By the time that summer was over, he'd become really quite good.

I told him it wasn't gonna be a long-term thing; I think he was okay with that; really grateful that I had raised his game! Me? I soon

wanted a short fling with a selfish bastard. Needed to scratch that nasty itch.

But Doug –decent Dougie- stayed in touch with me. And when I left home to try modeling in London, I knew I could count on Doug to look after me for a few weeks.

Eventually my career started up. I went by the name ‘Lines.’ I got a flat of my own the other side of town from Doug so’s not to torture him. Plus Fulham was closer to the agents and photographers.

Again, Dougie kept in contact. He’d call me every few months to see how I was. Very sweet, really. We’d meet for a drink or a meal. Sometimes we would, sometimes we wouldn’t. He was really easy that way.

And a welcome break from most of the arseholes I was dealing with. Becoming a model is a very tough climb. Enough people told me that I had the looks and the figure; photographers were always happy to shoot me on spec, but almost half of them –really, no exaggeration! - hit on me. Wonder why models look aloof and sour when they’re not ‘on’? Because it’s a huge grind protecting yourself from lying, unscrupulous bastards in the biz. Wonder why I stuck at it? Because the rewards can be pretty spectacular: travel, parties, the best hotels and restaurants, and if you’re lucky, good pay. And I was determined –really driven- to succeed, on my terms, without compromising myself. Ok; so did I repel every advance? Shit, no. I pleased myself, giving rein to both sides of me; taking on decent blokes as well as a few selfish buggers.

So for the first few years in London, I was doing catalogue and ‘lesser’ magazine work. Hectic, but ok. In winter, I’d be flown to Europe –Spain, Majorca, Portugal, The Canary Isles- for shoots. There were a few more exotic locations, too: Morocco, Egypt, and Sweden. I lived frugally back in Fulham and managed to save some money.

My agent started getting me booked for the good mags. And the top shooters. The studios were classier, the outfits were higher end, and the locations were more glamorous. I did a few bookings in New York, and the response was great. So I thought, why not try working full time in America?

For about six months, I rented out my Fulham flat and sub-let a place in New York's Chelsea district. I quickly got an agent in NY and after a round of courtesy auditions, the work started coming in. Like in London, I began doing catalogue and catwalk stuff. And like in London, the quality of gigs soon picked up: better fashion magazines, ads for the top cosmetics, even a couple of TV commercials!

And life was good. The NY scene was crazy; far more frantic than London, atch. Penthouse parties, fancy bars, trendy clubs; you name it, I was up for it. Thankfully I'm blessed with a strong constitution. I could party all night, and bounce right back the next day. Course I kept an eye on my intake, too. Some of the NY girls really overdid it, but I was relatively careful about what I ate, drank, smoked and shoved up my nose. My agent, Dawn, was an angel. She steered me to the better scenes and told me who and what to keep clear of. I was working regularly, pulling in good coin, and enjoying myself. And – again, thanks to Dawn- I made sure to stash the cash. You don't stay at the top level forever, and work for aging models is neither plentiful nor rewarding.

After a year, though, I ran into a problem. I'd got a work visa early on and been able to renew it after six months. But then, I got a letter from the immigration people. They were cracking down, saying that they wouldn't renew the visa again. Bollox!

A friend introduced me to an immigration lawyer. He said there was nothing much he could do. Would probably be able to persuade them to give me a six month extension, but after that, I'd have to apply for citizenship. Or get a green card. But the odds of getting a green card were slim, unless I got married either to a US citizen or someone who had a green card.

As it happened, though, I had a friend with a green card: Dougie.

He had moved to NY a few years before, too. Doing his advertising and invention stuff. And he had a really cool loft downtown. I'd seen him a few times, like in London, and I knew he'd help me out if he could. See, once I had my green card, I could get divorced and keep it. It was a well-known racket. But you had to really convince the authorities that it wasn't an arranged marriage of convenience. You had to live together like a legit marriage.

I realized then that Doug might just be my best, truest, most trusted friend. I suppose it seems rather callous to say that, precisely when I needed him; why did I not know it all along? It's not that I didn't; I had just never needed someone up until then. But I know that if Doug had ever come to me with a really important ask or favor, I would have done whatever I could to help him.

30. 2018. *'So Sorry': Feist. Jeans; floral blouse; ballet flats.*

Doug and Caroline seemed like a perfect couple. After seeing them in the store a few times, I presumed they were married (turns out that they were, but not in the conventional way I'd imagined,) and that they would be together for the foreseeable future. They were completely comfortable with one another, sometimes teasing, sometimes laughing, sometimes a little brusque. They knew one another's tastes exactly. Doug flirted with me a little, but not in any meaningful way.

And then Caroline was gone.

After seeing him but not her in the store for a few weeks, I asked after her. I knew she was the model 'Lines' –I'd seen her face in magazines more and more often- and wondered if she was away on a prolonged shoot or something.

"No; we sort of split up." Doug said.

"Oh, I'm sorry." I replied.

"No need; it just ran its course." He told me.

"Well perhaps you'll get back. People do, you know."

"Yeah. I doubt it. But we're still friends. I expect you'll see her again sometime."

A few more weeks went by, and I only saw Doug alone. He seemed to be more attentive to me, and I have to say I was flattered. I liked him, and I have to say his being married to a gorgeous, well-known model, didn't decrease his appeal. He wasn't wearing his wedding band any longer, but I had no idea of their status.

So I asked.

"It's really none of my business, but are you and Caroline getting divorced?"

"Oh. Um, yes, actually."

"I'm sorry..."

“Oh no need. It’s not quite what it seemed. Tell you what; let’s have a drink one evening and I’ll explain all.”

So we met a few days later at The Odeon, and Doug confided that he and Caroline had got married so she could get a green card. Over a couple of cocktails, he told me all about their relationship. How they had met when teenagers; how they had gone out, but never really been in love; how they had stayed in contact and seen one another from time to time as friends -with benefits; and then how they had lived together as husband and wife. It seemed very sophisticated. I was intrigued and attracted. So when he asked me to dinner, I accepted.

A week later, Doug asked me out again. He said two old friends were in town and we joined them for dinner, and then went on afterwards to The Mudd Club, a very ‘in’, and hard to get in, after hours, hangout frequented by music and media celebrities.

Doug’s friends were Steve and his wife Sally. Steve was the manager of a record label and Sally was a singer. It was all very exotic. We were whisked past a line of people outside the velvet rope and shown into an upstairs bar. I recognized several rock and movie stars whom Steve and Sally knew. We drank bourbon and did coke quite openly. Doug and Steve bantered very entertainingly, the way Brits can, and Sally was charming. She asked me about how I felt about Doug and I realized as I told her, that I was by now quite captivated by him.

That night –or morning, more like- I went back to his loft where Doug and I fucked for the first and longest time. The combination of chemicals and circumstance seemed to prolong and magnify the experience beyond anything I had felt before.

Doug seemed to feel the same way. We slept until midday, when he brought a mug of coffee to me.

“That was the best night ever.” He said.

“Mmm. I think I agree!”

“Steve and Sally really like you. More to the point, so do I.”

“They’re lovely. And you’re pretty amazing, too.”

“I don’t want to rush anything, but....”

“I know. I feel the same way...”

“I mean I hardly know you.”

“Well, it’ll be great getting to know one another.”

We fucked again. I have to say that Doug knew his way around the female body better than any man I’d been with. Someone had trained him very well! Doubtless Caroline.

The next few months were a feast of fun. Doug and I were together almost constantly. I moved into his loft and sublet my apartment. We went to LA for a week and stayed with Steve and Yvette at their amazing house on Laurel Canyon. We drove down to San Diego and spent a week at a house on the bluffs overlooking the Pacific in Del Mar. We went scuba diving on Isla Mujeres off the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, and wind surfing on St Barth’s. We visited his brother Fred and his family for Christmas in England.

When we returned to New York, Doug asked me to marry him and I agreed. Even though I didn’t love him.

31. 1983. *'Who Can It Be Now': Men at Work. Black Levis; dark blue, double-breasted blazer; dark brown, suede desert boots.*

I'm laying out my stuff in a modest room at The Beverley Hills Hotel. Half an hour ago, I had arrived in a rented convertible. Between LAX and the hotel, I had stopped at a friend of Steve's West Hollywood condo and picked up a gram of Peruvian marching powder. I was all set for a week of shooting another (lame) TV spot.

Caroline was in LA for a fashion shoot, staying at the Chateau Marmont. Pure, happy coincidence, though it was unlikely that our schedules would enable us to see much of one another.

My agency producer and art director were arriving separately; we had arranged to meet in the Polo Lounge at 6:00 for drinks and plans. In those days, the Beverley Hills was frequented by old school 'A' list celebrities, agents, journalists and East Coast Ad agency people with over stuffed expense accounts. I was in the last and least fashionable category.

I walked through reception towards the fabled bar. Margot and Tony were there, at a table with a phone: Very chic. Margot had been contacted by the production company; they invited us to dinner at Ivy in Santa Monica. We had a couple of cocktails, then Margot called for her car. On our way to the front door, I was intercepted by a bellhop with a message for me. It was a long, rambling tome replete with spelling and grammar mistakes. Some due to the hotel operator who had taken the call, some due to the caller, the German speaking VP of international affairs at the agency I was working for.

The gist of the communiqué that I read aloud on our way to the Shore, was that I was to go to the agency's San Diego branch a.s.a.p. to head up an important new business pitch. The VP (Karl) wanted to know if I needed my passport (!) and any clothes. They could arrange for someone to go to my NY loft and pack a back. I was to call Karl the following morning.

Margot, Tony and I shared a laugh. My passport? Had Orange County really become so right wing?

After a pleasant dinner with our hosts, Margot, Tony and I drove back to The Hills. I had called Caroline at the Chateau to see if she wanted to do a couple of lines and have a nightcap, so was taking a cab from my Hotel to hers.

Caroline and I stayed up until dawn talking over one another and emptying her mini-bar. I called Karl from her room. His bad English complicated our discussion, but it soon became clear that my assignment was not in San Diego CA, but in Santiago, Chile. The new business pitch was two weeks away, and I was to fly there immediately. There were no non-stop flights from LAX to Chile, but Karl had booked me on to a direct, Lan Chile flight through Lima, Peru. My passport and green card were being shipped to the Beverley Hills, and a suitcase, with more clothes, were on their way to a hotel in Santiago.

Coincidentally, Caroline and I had seen the movie 'Missing' in New York a few weeks earlier. Set in Chile, It's a fact-based thriller framed by the FBI's involvement in the right wing Pinochet coup that had killed elected president Salvador Allende and murdered hundreds of his supporters in a football stadium. Chile was still being run by Pinochet and his military goons.

I was a little nervous, but excitement and curiosity offset my concern. I gave Caroline half of what remained of my coke and returned to the Beverley Hills to re-pack, collect my passport, bid my farewells and go back out to LAX.

The old expression 'carrying coals to Newcastle' was racing through my head throughout the ten-hour flight from LA. My friend Steve had warned me NOT to bring my marching powder through customs at Lima so I had to consume what I had left on the plane. Suffice to say that not only did I not sleep, but I talked the ears off all the flight attendants, claiming –legitimately- the need to brush up my schoolboy Spanish. When we touched down at Lima, we were only

permitted in the 'cleared' part of the airport while the plane was serviced. Huh!

Chile turned out to be a most beautiful country and a delightful experience. I was lodged at a small boutique hotel in Santiago where for the three weeks I was there, I tried to convince the barman that I wasn't FBI.

Everyday I walked the two miles to the ad agency. Housed in a rambling, Spanish colonial style mansion, it was the least 'office' like space. Offered a choice of rooms to work in, I opted for a corner of the loggia overlooking the garden. The occasional gardener's mower engine and rumble from the subway below the house punctuated birdsong and chatter from the kitchens, staffed by women who provided espressos and sandwiches throughout the day.

The project I was working on reflected the confused politics of the time: the government had authorized banks and financial companies to offer life assurance and investment products for the first time. But the capitalist nature of this development was mitigated by mandated socialist conditions: the terms of every company's offering had to be exactly the same!

The companies could advertise their products, yet there was no point in touting their respective benefits, as each was identical. It was a branding battle.

The company we were pitching was called Summa. Its logo was a simple, stylized tree showing branches above ground and roots below.

Through good luck, I landed on the proposed slogan early on: 'Cultivando Sus Raices.' It turns out that in Spanish, raices meant roots and estate. So the double entendre linked the Summa logo with a promise that the company would grow your capital, without actually asserting that.

The agency owner/CEO, a charming, avuncular man named Juan-Carlos Hernandez, and his execs were delighted. All I had to do was develop scripts and visuals. The art director with whom I was partnered and I agreed on a simple animation concept: as the narration described the (identical) plan details, the tree's roots would grow deep below the ground, then the branches would grow out, and fruit would appear.

The campaign took less than a week to develop and the stress I might have felt had the solution not presented itself so soon was happily absent. I was free to supervise the storyboarding each morning, and then take a long lunch at one of the restaurants in the neighborhood. I discovered the delights of Pisco –a clear, South American distillation- and bitter lemon; the plumpest, freshest avocados on the planet, and ceviche. Often the latter would include a huge, tennis ball shaped sea urchin whose freshness was guaranteed by a live, spider crab atop the pink flesh. The custom was to swallow this whole (and live) washed down with Pisco.

After lunch, I would stroll back to the agency and take a twenty-minute siesta on the loggia.

The weekend before the new business pitch, I drove out to Viña del Mar where it chanced that an aged aunt of mine lived. A close relative –my father's sister- I had met her only once when I was a kid. She had an entire family that I hadn't met in Viña and Valparaiso.

By now I had figured out that the rumbles of the subway I heard at the office were in fact earth tremors. There was no subway in Santiago, but like all of Chile, it was located on the Ring of Fire, the giant system of fault lines that extend through South America and on to California and the US west coast, then around to the east coast of Asia and down to Indonesia and New Zealand. The tremors that I felt in Santiago were frequent, but quite benign.

My old aunt took me for lunch with her son and his family. We were outside in the backyard making awkward, polite conversation. Dogs throughout the neighborhood started barking and there was an

ominous ring around the sun. Sure enough, an earthquake hit. It wasn't severe, lasting perhaps forty-five seconds. But it scared the crap out of me. I was impressed how my two nephews, immune to the quake, chased their burgers around the plates the food, like everything, was being shaken this way and that.

Back in Santiago, the new business pitch went well. Juan-Carlos took me and the team out to a very expensive dinner afterwards and the following morning I booked myself on a flight back to New York. First class, thank you.

The epilogue to this story is somewhat sad. I had sourced an excellent animation company in Buenos Aires to produce the Summa commercials. Their storyboards, animatics and early, fully rendered scenes were perfect. I and the team in Chile were very gratified.

And then the Falklands/Malvinas war broke out. As the British gained the upper hand, more and more young Argentinian men were called up, including, it became clear, the animators.

Weeks went by without further production and when the company finally sent the next work, it was simply terrible: primitive illustration 'animated' in a laughably jerky, jumpy fashion. The commercials were simply unusable. By then, a Chilean producer was handling the campaign and I ceased to be consulted. Oh well.

32. 2017. *'Johnny Be Good': Chuck Berry. Dark blue Chelsea FC hoodie; jeans; white hi-tops.*

It took Keef several takes, over an hour or so, to complete the 'Boxing Day' narration. But when the engineer had pieced it together, cutting out Keith's breaths, 'ums', 'ers', 'oh shits' and 'fuck its', it sounded great. I had eliminated the entire scene where the kid walked by the shelter and replaced it with his realization that he and the family had too much stuff.

Credit to Keith. (Ok, and to Pierre, I suppose.) The simplified storyline worked very well. I thanked Keith profusely.

"No problem, mate. I enjoyed it to be honest. Hope it goes well. Send me the video when you've done the cartoons." And the great rock and roll icon returned to his strumming.

Pierre and I left the studio and had a celebratory beer. He busied himself texting friends about meeting Keith and I called the production company in LA that Terry Gilliam had asked to do the preliminary animation 'on spec.'

"Joel. It's Doug. How's it going?"

"Hi Doug. Really good. We're busy as hell. It's crazy here."

"That's great. Well I have the Boxing Day narration recorded. We made a few changes...simplified the story, actually. Believe it or not it was Keith's idea.."

"Keith. Oh really? Keith is your illustrator friend, right?"

"No, no. Keith Richards. He agreed to do the narration. I think I told you. We recorded him today. He was great..."

"Oh wow. Keith Richards is the voice over? Wow! Does he sound like Johnny Depp?"

"Haha. I think the other way round. Anyway can I send you the link to the file? I think the pacing is pretty good but you guys can always open it up here and there to fit the animation...."

"Yeah. Yeah. That works, Doug. What's your timeline on this? Like I said, we're crazy busy just now."

“Well, there’s no actual deadline, but we promised the British government people that the whole thing would be ready by the end of 2019.”

“I’ll have to get in touch with Terry, Doug. I think he’s shooting something.... somewhere in the world. We can’t start without him.”

“Yeah, I know. Well, presumably you can start doing some initial animatics? I realize you we need Terry to oversee the character designs and stuff...”

“Exactly. There’s no point in us doing anything until he’s here...”

“Ok. Can you try to reach him? I’ll try too....”

“Yeah, yeah. That’s great, man. It’s a plan. I’ll call you when I’ve got in touch with him.”

I hung up, rather deflated.

33. 2018. *'Il fait chaud'* Busy P remix. Corine & Busy P. Nike running shell; Under Armour pants; Newton running shoes.

I didn't realize my parents were separated until I was about 10. Because they weren't really separated. They just alternated being at home and looking after me. When both of them were together, they were perfectly civil to each other, and didn't compete for my affection.

We moved from NY, where I was born and spent my first eight years, to Massachusetts but the biggest difference was moving from the city to a suburb. It happened as I went from kindergarten to 1st grade and the school in Massachusetts began at 1st grade. So we were all meeting one another for the first time. The suburban kids were a little more protected, but Tribeca was hardly The Bronx so I wasn't exactly a street kid.

My dad spent more time at home now. Mum wasn't working at the food store or travelling around the country selling her Broissants. But she worked as a sous-chef at a nearby restaurant. She was still at work when Doug got home, so again, they were somewhat separated.

I never really asked them about it until I was at NYU. Apart from on a couple of occasions, they alternated their visits to me. I asked Jenny first.

"Oh, well your Dad and I are still very good friends, but after a while, I guess we fell out of love. We could have left one another, but since we were friendly and shared you, it made more sense to keep one home and kind of live our separate lives."

"Do you have other boy friends?"

"Sure. I think you met one or two...and Doug sees other women. You know Caroline?"

"Of course." (I had met her many times.) "But I thought she and Dad are just old friends."

"Well that's true. But they were married to one another before your dad and I got married."

"And afterwards? Did they go back to.....having an affair?"

“I honestly don’t know, Jules. I never asked.”

A few weeks later, when Dad was in NY and took me to dinner, I asked him.

“Your mom fell out of love with me, but it was very amicable. We decided to try a kind of ‘same-address-separation.’ It meant we were both there for you and it was much more affordable than having two apartments.”

“Do you have other girlfriends?”

“Um...yes; no one particularly special, though.”

“What about Caroline?”

“Oh she’s just a friend, really.”

“Mom says you were married to her.”

“Yes. Before Jenny and I married. But Caroline and I got married because she needed a green card. Once she got it, we divorced and she moved out.”

“So you weren’t in love with her?”

“You know, Caroline was my first ever girlfriend, years ago, in England. I think I was in love with her early on, a kind of teenage infatuation, really. But she never fell in love with me. She told me she would go out with me, but that we weren’t soul mates.”

“What about Mom? Were you in love with her?”

“Oh definitely.”

“Were you hurt when she said she didn’t love you?”

“She never put it that way. It was gradual. And by the time it was clear that she didn’t, I had adjusted to it.”

So there it was: two versions of the story that were marginally different, but that basically gelled with one another. And for me, really nothing that I didn’t know, actually or intuitively. Except for the part about Dad and Caroline being married. And when I asked Caroline about it months later (she was a kind of surrogate aunt to me,) she said that she did, and had always loved my dad. And that she didn’t stay with him because she knew that if she did, she would eventually hurt him.

34. 2018. *'Everyone's a Winner': Hot Chocolate. Grey cashmere hoodie; black jeans; cozy, Allbirds sneakers.*

The royalties from the cosmetics products that I had combined had long since run out. And the British based company that made them, with which I had the agreement, went out of business in the early 00's.

Too bad; because I had another idea which I wanted to pitch to them.

Premise: Millions if not billions of dollars are spent establishing brands and keeping awareness of them fresh in consumers' minds. Brand familiarity is a key driver in choosing which one to buy. As digital media became more prominent, it became even harder and more expensive to establish and maintain this essential brand awareness.

Might there be a short cut?

Sitting in the coffee shop in Madison CT every morning, I looked out at the crossroads where four unavoidable, octagonal, red Stop signs were planted. How many of these ubiquitous signs are there in the US and throughout the world, actually, since it's an international symbol?

Was the 'brand awareness' of this sign universal? Probably.

So who owned the rights to the sign with its white border and four block capital letters? For a deep dive, you can visit the excellent Wikipedia page here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stop_sign.

One thing you won't find is any mention of copyright or ownership. The stop sign appears, by default, to be in the public domain.

But if a company developed a product called STOP, with the iconic red design as its logo, it would instantly, automatically 'inherit' billions of billboards.

I tracked down the marketing director I had dealt with all those years ago to a big pharma/cosmetics company in the Midwest.

“Bill? It’s Doug. Doug King...how are you?”

“Doug? My god. I was just thinking about you the other day. What’s going on?”

“I have another hair brain idea that could be worth millions. You interested?”

“Haha. What’s the catch?”

“No catch, but I’d prefer to discuss it in person –after you’ve signed a NDA.”

“Well fine. Where are you? Downstairs in the lobby of the building?”

“No; I’m in Connecticut where I live now. Do you ever come this way?”

“I visit New York from time to time; want to meet me there? I’ll be coming out in a week or two. I’m in Miami right now...”

The prospect of a day or two in a Miami Beach hotel was irresistible. It was, after all, mid-November and the Connecticut shoreline had just had its first deep, damp, heavy snow dump. I cleared as much of Caroline’s driveway as I could, enough at least for me to get the Bimmer out. (She had a far more robust, though very temperamental, Land Rover.) I drove to my new ‘local’ airport –Bradley- serving Hartford CT and Springfield MA, and boarded a rare direct flight: In this case to Ft. Lauderdale.

And after driving to Miami Beach and checking into the vibrant but noisy Hyatt Resort hotel, I took a cab to Midtown and met Bill at the wonderful Sugarcane restaurant.

He looked much older, though reasonably distinguished. Looking at him, I read his thoughts: I too looked much older though reasonably presentable. We exchanged pleasantries over mescal mojitos, and then got down to business.

“So Bill; how much would it cost you to establish a new brand of, say, dandruff shampoo? Or deodorant? Or condoms?”

“You want an actual figure or a very vague ballpark? We talking US or global?”

“Never mind. I know it would cost millions or many millions either way. Next question. To what extent do you group products by body part or function? Hair products? Personal hygiene? Oral care?.....”

“Oh crap, Doug. You’ve been to CVS; you know how it works, hair care, oral care, blah blah. Just tell me what you’ve got.”

“What if all your products that stop conditions you don’t want were marketed under the name ‘Stop’? So you’d have Stop Deodorant, Stop Dandruff Shampoo, Stop sunscreen and so on. And what if the Stop logo looked like this?”

I showed Bill a mock-up of the Stop Deodorant packet that my friend Pierre had created. He looked bemused.

“After an initial wave of introductory marketing, you could simply let the billions of stop signs worldwide act as continual brand reminders. It’s so simple. And yes, you can appropriate the Stop sign because it’s in the public domain.”

Bill was quiet for a moment; quite a long moment, in fact.

“Why hasn’t anyone done this before?” was the best he could come up with. Dinner was on Bill.

* * *

Footnote. Stop was a huge success.

At its peak, there were about a dozen ‘Stop’ products in the US, and more or less worldwide. The products were premium quality –and price- to stand up to the scrutiny of the gimmicky marketing; the public loved the radical and cheeky approach.

After two years success, the company began making too many ‘Stop’ products, and tried using ‘Yield’ and ‘OneWay’ as ‘sister’ brands. This escalation broke the Gladwell rule of too many choices, and sales

began to slide. And around this time, multiple lawsuits brought by competitors began to mount up and threaten the company.

By then, Bill and I had both profited rather nicely, though nowhere near as nicely as the parent company, its directors and shareholders.

35. 2017. *'Runaway': Bonnie Raitt. Lucky Jeans; Madewell cashmere sweater; shoes?*

Julia was long gone: three and a half years at NYU –during which she only returned home for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and a few days over the summer- then straight into a job in Manhattan and an apartment in Brooklyn. It seemed that she had put her childhood on overdrive in a manic rush to become an adult and start her 'real' life.

Oh, people –everyone, in fact- said what a lovely kid she was; how polite/smart/charming etc. etc.; what a great job Doug and I had done. And it was impossible to disagree with all that. Except that Doug and I had really done little more than what came naturally and easily to us. Jules had never been difficult, had always managed herself well and had determined her own future. We watched, complimenting her and continually offering help and advice, which she never needed.

So there was no need to keep up the façade of our home. I had been working as a sous-chef at a bistro a few miles from our house, which gave me little more than a routine. Doug had been travelling more and more, either for his advertising work, for the preposterous 'Stop' business, for his Boxing Day thing or for some other project. So I told him I was leaving.

He was neither surprised nor disappointed. He offered to buy my half share of the house and advance me some extra cash so that I could move somewhere and set up something. Perhaps the 'Stop' business wasn't so preposterous after all.

And so I moved back to New York –not too close to Julia- and opened a catering business with a chef friend.

Doug and I saw very little of one another after that; we exchanged texts and emails, almost exclusively about Jules, and occasionally met –with her- for dinner or to watch her play soccer.

I was certain Doug would go back with Caroline. I didn't know whether they had stayed in touch with one another, I didn't know what or where she was up to. But a couple of years later, Doug sold the Boston house and moved down to Connecticut where –surprise, surprise- Caroline just happened to be living.

36. 2017. *'Straight Shot': Dvotchka. Under Armor running shorts; Nike running shell; Brooks running sneakers.*

I crammed a lot into the years between leaving Dougie and meeting up with him again. (I did see him a couple of times; once for a quick drink in NY, once for dinner when I had a shoot in LA and he was out there.)

Like anyone whose livelihood depends on their body more than –or as much as- their mind, I was very conscious that my best years would come earlier, then slowly but most surely decline. Although I had a few acting jobs, most were commercials. And although my agent urged me to go out for middle-ages roles, my head was never really in it. I suppose I 'acted' like the 25-30 year old that I felt inside even when I looked like my 40-50+ age. I was relatively careful with my body, but I love food and drink and exercise is always something I force myself through.

(God how I envy people like Julia. She seems to actually prefer healthy, vegetarian food; loves running and staying in shape; and continues to be an excellent soccer player. She'll always look 10-15 years younger than her actual age. Not that it matters; her profession doesn't require physical scrutiny.)

So I had to maximize my earnings and be sure to save enough for when I could no longer get work. As a model, you travel and socialize in expensive high-end places. Many, most, in fact, of the girls try to get their tabs picked up. It's a very chauvinistic life. Of course there's always a quid pro quo. And I'm very picky. As I discovered, a lot of the girls are gay or bi. Some out of sexual preference, some out of a need for gratification and an objection to many –or any- men. You can only pleasure yourself for so long. I had a longer list of lovers than I care to say.

And a vast majority of them were 'paybacks'. In this way, I managed to squirrel away enough to live on in my later years without the need of a partner. If I wanted a partner, that would be up to me.

So when Doug happened to move down to the Connecticut Shoreline, where I had bought a house, it presented me with a dilemma. He needed somewhere to live –although he had saved enough from his weird inventions and projects- and he had certainly helped me out years before. We had dinner at one of my favorite places and discussed a possible arrangement.

At first, he insisted that he intended to buy his own place. He had sublet an old ranch near the shore for three months, and was indeed doing the rounds with the many realtors in the area. But we both knew it was impractical and wasteful for both of us to own and maintain homes: two can live for pretty much the same as one. My house had three bedrooms, one quite separate from the other two on the first floor, with its own bathroom. And there were a couple of living rooms so that we could coexist without living together.

I needed to lay down a few conditions. First, this cohabitation was feudal: Doug would be my lodger, subject to my rules. Break ‘em, and move out.

“What are your rules then darling? Rent due first of each month; split utilities; no washing up left overnight; what about guests?”

“All the above. As for guests, I myself have very few. I occasionally entertain someone overnight, but he –or she- never stays longer. I’d suggest the same for you.”

“She? How often do you have she sleepovers?”

“Doug, my sleepover guests –be they animal, vegetable or mineral- are my business. That’s another rule: you –we-both have to know when to be invisible and when not to ask questions.”

“Fair enough. But I take it we can share meals, drinks, conversations, watch TV together and so on; I mean this doesn’t spell the end of our friendship, right?”

“Of course. But I won’t crowd you and you mustn’t crowd me or this arrangement just won’t work out.”

Well, we’d been together for six months and it did seem to work out. Doug was a decent cook, so that was a huge plus. Sharing the home costs was obviously great. Having our own spaces was essential and Doug rarely joined me without my inviting him. As for sleepover guests, my previous ventures hadn’t been particularly marvelous, motivated as they had been by infrequent (these days) primal urges. It seemed that Doug was on the same biological calendar because he rarely failed to come home and never had sleepover guests.

As for our urges, if and when I had one, I paid a visit to Doug’s quarters, and he dropped hints when he’d welcome visiting mine. We had what I called ‘codger sex’ and Doug referred to as ‘lodger sex:’ not particularly athletic or contorted, lots of rubbing, stroking, licking and sucking. He had always been able to penetrate me in either orifice gently but very satisfyingly. And I never had to prep myself in any way as Doug professed to liking me ‘all grimy, sweaty and dirty.’

At some point there would be problems, I knew. But were they months or years away?

37. 1974. *'Imagine' John Lennon. Ancient tie-dye T-shirt; denim shorts; dirty white Stan Smith's.*

What do I believe? I mean spiritually?

When I was about six or seven, my parents decided they should take Fred and me to church. It lasted about three weeks, as I remember. It was the Presbyterian church in Wimbledon. My father came from a long, pure (I.E. inbred?) line of Scots, all fire-breathing Presbies. (BTW Presbyterian is an anagram of Best In Prayer, which is an interesting though irrelevant coincidence.) My mother was milquetoast Church of England.

Anyway Fred and I sat on the cold, hard pews with our parents for most of the service, and then were led away to join other kids for Sunday school. I think the ritual ended because it ate into my father's main religion, golf.

The next religiosity I experienced was at my first boarding school. We had 'chapel' twice each Sunday, and Divinity classes once a week. I quite enjoyed some of the chapel. The pews had cushions, for one, and before my voice changed, I liked singing the hymns. Also I was a good reader and was one of a handful of boys who got up to read 'the lesson' from a big ass bible. It was good training for a later, tertiary career doing voice overs for ads.

At the heinous boarding school in Scotland, we had to endure chapel twice each Sunday and once on Wednesdays. No soft cushions here, and since my attitude towards it had hardened, no lesson reading. I honestly don't know anyone at the school who had anything positive to say about these wretched sessions.

Inevitably, considering all that time even half listening to words and sermons from the Bible, I absorbed much of the Christian scriptures. To this day, I can answer most Jeopardy scripture questions and biblical NY Times crossword clues. When the time came at the Scottish school for me to consider confirmation (a decision that could surely come at any age, but was restricted there to fourth formers,) I

opted for it. Not because I had a shred of belief, but because it involved bible classes from the creepy Minister at his school provided digs. We could smoke a cigarette going there and back, and distract him sufficiently most lessons to snatch his bottle of sherry and grab a few swigs.

Even so, I know that a few of my fellow students believed in 'god', including my brother Fred.

I did not. Not even slightly. Earlier, I thought that perhaps I was the one out of step. How could so many, such a majority of people, throughout history, throughout the world believe in something that I considered a vacuous illusion? I must be tainted, denied by the gods, heathen even evil.

Yet I recognized good and bad; I had a fully functioning conscience. I experienced love and joy, regret and remorse. I could sympathize and empathize. It wasn't until I was in my late teens that I felt confident enough to discuss spirituality with friends. And I found that the friends I had developed mostly felt the same way.

Aside: Caroline did and does believe in a god not wholly dissimilar to the one we learn about in the Bible. Her behavior is not so far as I can tell affected by it, and she considers all of dogma and most religious 'professionals' to be BS. She is as disgusted by priests' and ministers' hypocrisy as any of us. But she believes in some form of after life or heaven and will 'pray' for outcomes that she wants.

Anyway events in my late teens and early twenties eventually morphed my atheism into spiritual agnosticism.

First came hallucinogenics. I had LSD, MDA and psilocybin (magic mushrooms) several times in my late teens/early twenties. For the most part, these trips ranged from enjoyable to remarkable. In all cases, the visual distortion was fascinating: I experienced patterns, shapes and colors quite removed from what I was actually looking at. I remember staring at a fireplace for ages; lying on my back watching clouds perform incredible animation shows; and being unable to walk

across a room because the carpet had turned into a very threatening swamp. None of these were particular revelations, the chemicals were simply altering and exaggerating reality. Sometimes I could 'control' the effects, sometimes not.

On one occasion, I and two of the friends I was tripping with were wandering around in a field in Wales when we all saw a bear. It was about fifty yards away from us, quite placid, and colored a remarkable black and tan color. We saw it at the same time and watched it until it strolled away. Was it a bear? Or a stray dog?

Again, this was nothing remarkable; just our minds being similarly affected.

But on a few occasions I experienced an incredible calm and clarity. I had conversations in which we solved global problems and read one another's thoughts. These experiences stayed with me afterwards and made me question whether some indescribable force or spirit was indeed accessible. There was nothing remotely god like about the sensations, but they were positive and delightful.

And on one occasion, I had a 'control' person to witness something extraordinary, my brother Fred.

Fred was/is a very good chess player. He taught me when we were kids, but I was never particularly skilled and never came close to beating him even when spelled a piece or two.

Both of us were at our mother's house one weekend. I don't recall the circumstances, but I had taken some acid and gone for a long walk. When I returned, Fred (who had no idea that I was tripping) asked me if I wanted a game of chess. He offered to play without a queen.

As soon as the board was set up, I saw lines emanating from each piece –his and mine- showing how I should play. Each time Fred made a move, I saw 'energy lines' indicating very clearly the move I should make in response. The game was over quite quickly, I had won!

Fred was quite surprised. I proposed another game with no queen advantage. He snorted! My winning the first game was surely a fluke.

We set the pieces up and again I saw these energy or force lines translucently superimposed on the board. And again, the lines showed me what and where I should move. The game went on quite a while. Fred was trying his hardest to win. But again I was able to beat him. Fred was perplexed and fascinated. He asked me if I had been playing much? No. Had I been reading chess books? No. In fact, I hadn't played for many months and that had been a 'game' with Caroline in which I was teaching her the moves.

Fred proposed another game but the acid was wearing off and I felt the edginess that often came with the dying embers of a trip. I needed to take a valium and lie down.

So where did that come from? I played Fred again a few months later unassisted by any hallucinogenic and was, as usual, roundly defeated.

So not as sensational as some miracles and visions people have reported, but enough to make me question whether there is something we don't know about.

Two more incidents cause me to question what's behind the curtain.

My friends George and Diana Melly bought a medieval castle in the middle of Wales in the early 70's. It was a solid block of a Norman Tower in the Breacon Beacons. No plumbing or electricity, but a delightful locations on the river Usk where George was keen to fish.

After Di had made the place somewhat habitable, she began inviting friends down for summer weekends. Local stories and information gleaned from the library records, suggested that beneath the six foot square, thick flagstones on the ground floor, Skethrog Tower had dungeons. Diana was keen to find out. She hired a contractor to raise

one of the flagstones and asked a group of people to come and witness the opening.

The two contractors arrived with a sturdy steel hoist, thick cable and a powerful motorized winch. They picked away between two flagstones and managed to get a couple of hooks under one of them which they connected to the cable.

We stood around in anticipation as the winch began to tighten the cable. The motor groaned against the weight of the flagstone, and suddenly the cable snapped. Unperturbed, the contractors sent for a thicker steel cable and attached it. Again the winch motor turned and strained, and then the hoist buckled. It was a pretty robust hoist, but two of its three legs simply bent. The contractors were determined to complete their assignment, but decided they had underestimated the weight of the flagstones. They promised to return the next day with a full scaffold, even thicker cable, and an even more powerful winch.

The replacement equipment took a couple of hours to set up. It was some serious rigging and we were all confident the flagstone would pop out like a cork.

No way! In succession, the new cable snapped; the hooks bent and the winch broke down. Each was replaced with newer, stronger parts. And then the scaffold collapsed. Hours had gone by, and the flagstone still had not budged.

The main contractor had started off with one assistant. By now, he had two more. And as parts were fetched from the village, word spread about the endeavor and locals came by the tower out of curiosity. Eventually a dozen or so were hanging around outside. The assistants became increasingly spooked and started repeating stories the villagers told them about the Tower's dungeon being haunted and 'sealed' shut. The main contractor would have none of it. He was utterly determined to move a flagstone. His repeated attempts had covered two or three different stones –each one as big as the next- but to no avail.

Finally, with a combination of machinery that could have lifted a great pyramid, they managed to get a flagstone to lift a few inches above the ground. We could see nothing in the darkness beneath even with a powerful flashlight, and the stone was only 'up' for a few minutes. There was a strange coldness and everyone felt indescribably spooked. Then something else broke and the stone crashed back down.

Di decided enough was enough and everyone including the main contractor was relieved.

Years later, I experienced another 'haunting.' I was staying alone overnight at the Georgetown Inn in Washington DC. A pleasant, squireish, but somewhat bedraggled place on Wisconsin Avenue. I enjoyed a good steak before going to bed.

In the middle of the night, I was woken by the bathroom light going on. I got up to switch it off (and pee,) and noticed that the steam heat hissing noise followed me around the bedroom. When I got to the bathroom, I heard a party going on in the next-door bedroom through the wall. It was quite raucous but back in the bedroom I could barely hear it. The steam sound repeated its trick of following me back to bed.

In the morning, I left the room and looked to the left side where the party had been going on, expecting to see trays of food and drinks outside the room. There was no next-door room! Mine was at the end of the corridor. I looked outside the window, and there was no adjacent building.

Downstairs at the reception desk, I told the clerk what I had heard. He apologized and said that reports like mine weren't rare. They believed the Inn was mildly and benignly haunted.

So I believe in some kind of something we don't know and can't reasonably explain. Call it another dimension for want of getting dramatic. Does it affect me on a day-to-day basis? Not a bit. My religion is confined to attempts at kindness and decency with as

much generosity as I can muster thrown in. When my number is called, I expect nothing more or less than a permanent, dreamless sleep which itself is unimaginable.

38. 2019. *'Firmament Vacation': The Soundtrack of Our Lives.*
Everlane jeans; Merrell winter Chelsea boots; Long sleeve T-shirt;
Uniqlo vest.

It was to be a dream rising from the ashes of a nightmare. Literally. On the many thousands of acres of Californian wasteland where once forests and villages had been, would be constructed the city of the future: Paradise Regained.

Huge and terrifying wildfires had destroyed a vast tract of land, and other disasters would inevitably cripple other communities in the future, all because of humankind's greedy, needy, unsustainable misuse of resources.

Efforts were in progress to fix some of what was wrong; parts of San Francisco, LA and other cities were being rethought and revised to rely less on carbon fuels. But with no blueprint for success, no one could agree on priorities, processes and goals. It was a stuttering affair made harder because daily living had to coexist with rebuilding.

A handful of uber-wealthy, ultra smart pioneers were herded under one virtual roof to design a future community from the ground up. Successful entrepreneurs like Musk and Branson; politicians like Warren and Obama; scientists, sociologists and seers, whose names meant little outside of their professional spheres, were assembled. Former CA governor Jerry Brown was the chair. Urgency overcame most philosophic and pragmatic hurdles. Incredibly, egos were for the most part sublimated, as when a cast of leading actors perform together. Rocking the boat wasn't an option as the coming tsunami was apparent to all.

Solar, wind and hydropower would fuel the city. Architects laid out optimal housing with plenty of communal green space and minimal vertical structures. Where necessary, multi-story buildings –typically commercial or industrial- would descend into the ground as much as rise high above it. Early on, it was agreed that the ideal source of water would be the rising oceans, solving –at least in part- two

problems: Desalination plants would render salt water fresh, and all wastewater would be re-cycled. Only long-term, recyclable or biodegradable plastics would be permitted. Vegetable based materials would be used instead.

How amazing that all the technologies needed for sustainable habitation had already been invented!

So what did I have to do with it?

Many ants were required to do the many lesser, lifting chores as the idealistic overview dove down deeper. Seems that Branson had my name on file from the airport idea I had pitched him years ago, and the file name was 'transportation.' I was on the getting-people-from-A-to-B-to-C committee.

The challenge wasn't just to design a public transport system, but to design one that was compatible with, and inclusive of, an individual, private means of getting around.

People like their cars, or bikes. They like being in their own space when travelling shorter distances, and they insist on being able to take their own route. They also like being able to take a recreational drive.

As with most every other energy efficient challenge, it turned out that the solution was decades old.

A Swedish inventor had come up with a way to link individual 'cars' together into 'trains' while still enabling them to function individually when wanted. Describing this requires considerable verbal dexterity and comprehension. But if you followed the Pumperella explanation earlier, this should be simple.

First, everyone has their own 'car'. It's electric, it can be autonomous or self-driven. It can be individually designed and accessorized etc., but the one commonality is its chassis design and dimensions: it will have a +/- 2 foot inverted \wedge groove going from front to back

underneath it. The wheels will be on the four corners, either side of the Λ .

At both ends of the car is a powerful electro-magnetic bumper.

The car can be driven conventionally or autonomously on local roads. And then there's a network of highways within the city, and connecting the city to others miles away. These highways aren't roads, but Λ tracks on which individual cars speed. The track/groove connection is electro-magnetic meaning there's no actual contact, so no friction or material erosion. The cars hover a few inches above the track. Propulsion along the track is computer controlled so that cars can travel at very high speeds with no risk of collision.

To get on to the 'highway', you just drive to an 'on' ramp, which has a graded Λ track so that you can get into position: once in the right position, the master computer reads your car and adds it to the highway stream when there's room. (If traffic were to get too congested, speeds would be adjusted, but way before that eventuality, lanes would be added.)

Once on the highway, the traffic is sped along automatically by programmed magnetic pulses, the electro-magnetic bumpers providing proper, safe distance between vehicles.

To exit the highway, and get back on to 'normal,' local roads, the process is reversed. You key in the desired exit, the Λ track 'switch' is triggered, and you gently exit on to the appropriate 'off' ramp where the Λ track descends, your wheels make contact with the road and you resume local driving.

The larger infrastructure problem was solved. The devilish details revolved around whether the cars would be privately or communally owned, how much of the city's grid would be Λ tracks and how many conventional roads, and other nitpicks like emergency vehicles (they would have to be airborne,) and speeds (the faster the better on Λ track highways, though many wanted limits.)

The city was code-named Paradise the same as the nearby town wiped out by fires. But there was much debate about the actual name, and I soon found myself on that committee, too.

Some of the names suggested included Utopia, Reverie, Positavo and Optimo from a list so long that it would inevitably jeopardize the venture. Brownsville was nixed by Jerry Brown, besides being one of many throughout the US, but Greenville was still in contention. Ultimately the naming project ceased to engage me. I knew from cynical experience that the decision was usually made randomly or politically, often at the last minute. And Paradise was a long way from last minute naming.

Nonetheless the assignment was/is enjoyable and rewarding; I say /is because although my committees have been wrapped up for now, we are on call to reassemble at various milestone stages. We had been physically together for three months in LA, SF and San José. I had been housed in the Marriott near SFO to which I had become considerably attached. On the bay across from the runway at Millbrae, it was between SF and Silicon Valley, just off the 101, so that access to almost anywhere I wanted to be, was as fast as it can be in California. The BART system ran from the nearby airport, and I was minutes from SFO itself so could jet back to the east coast easily and 'import' visitors. My daughter and Caroline both came for a couple of weeks each; the Paradise Regained project was generous with terms, conditions, perks and pay.

39. 2019. *'Malamente': Rosalía. Lucky Jeans; Madewell sweater; Uniqlo quilted vest.*

I don't know why he didn't ask me himself directly, but Julia and I were halfway through dinner at a favorite vegetarian place in NoHo when she casually mentioned that Doug was working on a British pub concept with some people and needed my help.

"What is it and what does he need my help for? And why didn't he ask me himself?"

"Oh I think he will. He told me quite a lot about it; he seems a bit conflicted about the idea, though."

"Well his work on the city of the future thing has probably mitigated many of the sins against humanity that he may have chalked up..."

"You sound very bitter about him, Mum. Maybe that's why he hasn't approached you yet..."

"Yeah, well I have no reason to be bitter towards your dad; the one thing we did collaborate on together was –is- wonderful...and I'm not talking about Broissants."

"So here's the concept he told me about..."

The British crash out of the European Union had been a financial, economic and social disaster for most. Many small and medium size companies who relied on importing or exporting products or parts for products had gone out of business. Non-European, global import/exports were hard to replace them with: you had to start developing markets from scratch. There was a glut of certain homegrown products so that Scotch and Shetland sweaters were plentiful and ridiculously cheap. It was generally chaotic, and divisive resentments between Brexiters and Remainers grew and amplified.

Doug had spent some time in the UK meeting with Branson and others, and had been able to see the landscape from a position of distanced, neutral familiarity. He wondered how to develop something that embraced the situation to both take advantage of it and make Brits feel better about their predicament. Spending time in pubs gave him an idea. Why not open a chain of pubs that specialized in British food and drinks wholeheartedly and progressively?

Imagine a pub where home-brewed beers, local wines and distilled spirits were paired with imaginative British dishes made with domestic vegetables and meats? Not your old fashioned, stodgy Shepherd's Pie with Watney's brown ale, but a truly enlightened cuisine that celebrated the culinary opportunities of new British generation?

Further reimagining this place, Doug proposed updating traditional British games like darts, dominoes, billiards and foosball into forms that retained the fun and inclusiveness, but reinterpreted them with digital updates.

Thus had he pitched 'The Jolly Brexiteer' to Branson and a bunch of his business buddies. They loved the idea. The pub needed a facelift and the restless British hoi polloi needed a new meeting place where they could develop and foster a new spirit.

Why Doug hadn't just stepped back and delegated each part of the puzzle to people qualified to solve it, even he wasn't quite sure. But he told his backers that he would provide the people to oversee food, beverage and entertainment development.

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Jenny was ambivalent about her challenge: to create a road map menu for a new British cuisine. Jules was excited about hers: rethink British pub games for the GenBrex (and everyone.) As for the beverages, no one really needed to rethink those. That was one business expertise that was thriving before Brexit. British micro-brews were many and excellent; likewise distilleries and vineyards. And a new wave of mixologists was already creating cool, new cocktails.

Jenny set to researching all the sustainable British food supplies to draw on. The Jolly B offerings had to be as accessible and enjoyable as current pub staples like crisps, scotch eggs, sausage rolls, skinny burgers and scampi in a basket, but have a new spin.

Julia set to making darts, pool, foosball and trivial games all digital and transformative. Existing technologies –Wii gaming and virtual reality- allowed for people to play games that previously had taken up space so that holographic boards and tables could float in the air while players used wand like pool cues, foosball handles and darts ‘gloves’ to activate the games.

Others in the pub could see the action, but not have to avoid feathery missiles or walk around pool or foosball tables. Other more contemporary games were also available in the same fashion, but exclusionary devices that required wearing goggles and couldn’t be seen by non-players were minimized. In this way the communality of the pub was maintained.

The interior design had to similarly combine new and traditional elements. Bright, light, airy spaces needed to include wood accents and retro fixtures that the old taverns had.

Pierre was called on to meet this challenge and his architectural background, graphic sensibilities and playful attitude were equally drawn upon.

The first Jolly Brexiteer concept pub was being developed on Chalk Farm Road in Camden Town abutting the train tracks by The Roundhouse. It was a quasi-hardscrabble, urban location surrounded by gentrification.

Walking distance from the Chalk Farm underground, there was enough vacant land to include a generous (for central London) parking lot.

40.2007. *'Saturday Morning': Eels. Light khaki shorts; navy FootJoy polo; white FJ ankle socks; white FJ Classics.*

The best golf shot I ever hit was a gamble and a fluke combined.

I was playing a routine Saturday morning game with three golf friends at a forgettable muni course just outside Boston. My game had been mediocre at best that morning. I had no real feel or consequent control over my shots. Drives had been sprayed right and left as well as going sprinkler straight. My iron play was somewhat better, but my short game and putting were way off.

Not surprisingly, then, my score was wretchedly in excess of my single digit handicap so there was no hope for a card I could put in to help qualify for the next U.S.Open.

On such days, I would try all kinds of adjustments to fix the problem and experiment with little practiced techniques.

I had recently shot a bunch of golf equipment commercials with several top PGA pros. The gap between their games and even a competent amateur like me is vast. They hit shots far farther, moving the ball left or right, high or low, adjusting the trajectory with ease and consistency.

In between set-ups on a course in Orlando, I hit a couple of drives and asked Adam Scott for a quick, free critique.

"Not bad. You know what you're doing. What do you shoot? 80?"

"Yeah. I'm an 8 handicap, which means I'm pleased when I break 80 and pissed off when I don't. Usually comes down to the scrambling and putting. Anyway I can get more length?"

Scott laughed.

“That’s what all amateurs want. But trust me, you hit the ball far enough. If you did anything to gain length, you’d sacrifice accuracy unless you practiced for several hours everyday.”

“Yes, but if I really want to cream a drive, is there one thing I can try?”
“Sure. It’s what we all do sometimes. But it’s risky because if you don’t get the timing exactly right, you’ll go way left or way right.”

Adam then showed me the trick. Without changing anything else about my swing, he had me cock my wrists quite dramatically open on the backswing, then snap them back on the downswing, timing it so that they were in the original neutral position precisely at impact. I tried it a few times with him but never got it quite right. As he predicted, shots flew way right when I didn’t recock early enough, and I smothered them low and left when I recocked too soon.

He then hit three drives employing the same trick. Two flew straight and prodigiously long, one flared way right.

Anyway that Saturday I decided to try it again. It was the 13th hole, a long par 4 a little uphill. The fairway turned slightly right to left with a right to left slope. But around 300 yards from the tee, the ground flattened and straightened out. So anything less than a 300-yard drive had to have a slight fade to counter the roll but not too much that it would send the ball up the hill and into the rough. A draw would have to start right and be very subtle to avoid running down the slope and into unplayable bushes on the left. Needless to say it was a daunting shot: par on the hole was a huge accomplishment, a bogey was par for us.

I announced to my amused playing partners that I was probably going to birdie the hole.

With my normal stance, I took two slow practice swings cocking then releasing my wrists. Then I addressed a brand new Titleist ProV1, and swung. It felt as if I had completely missed the ball, there was no sense of impact. I looked up and watched as the ball flew higher, faster and way farther than ever before. It landed on the flat over 300

yards out and rolled on another fifteen yards to leave me with a simple 9 iron or pitching wedge to the green.

My friends were gob struck. So was I!

As we walked up the fairway, I explained what I had done. The very dodgy, one-in-a-million miracle shot had come off perfectly.

Needless to say for the next five holes, they all tried the technique. Needless to say, a lot of balls were lost!

41. 2019. *'Jumping Jack Flash': Ananda Shankar. Uniqlo jeans; Everlast cashmere hoodie.*

Doug had to leave the 'Jolly Brexiteer' development in early December to spend the Christmas holidays in America. 'Boxing Day' had been completed a few months earlier, and was going to be screened at cinemas all across New England before the feature movies.

It was to be used to promote a real Boxing Day celebration. Working with The American Red Cross, Doug had spearheaded a cause marketing effort designed to solicit donations.

Drop off boxes wrapped with Red Cross Boxing Day branding would be placed at shopping malls and other public spaces. A chain of Pubs in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut called The British Beer Company –and other independent watering holes- would be celebrating Boxing Day with Turkey dishes and Mince Pies.

With little hard news in the pre-christmas period, TV and radio news stations were delighted to promote the event, showing brief trailers of the short video featuring Keef's narration and Terry Gilliam's wonderfully inspired animation.

Keith had also collaborated with musicians including Mark Knopfler to compose a music score for the video. Doug was thrilled with the result; as much for finally getting it actually produced as for the product itself. Truth be told, he was still too close to it to see the whole 'forest.' Not a frame went by without him remembering details and issues behind the end production. Critical reviews were generous; but there again, it would have been incredibly churlish to pan such a well-intentioned effort.

There was no official premiere or launch per se, but Doug went to New York with Caroline and Pierre the first day the video would be screened in cinemas, and watched it at three central Manhattan Multiplexes before enjoying a celebratory dinner at The Odeon, an old favorite watering hole across the road from his old loft.

Perhaps warmed by the close location of several months of debauchery while they were 'married', Caroline generously proffered a special Boxing Day shag that night.

42. 2019. *'Astronomy Domine': The Claypool Lennon Delirium. Jeans, High neck Under Armor sweat shirt, Merrell Winter Boots.*

So cross off another project from my list. Whether Boxing Day would become 'evergreen' as I hoped remained to be seen. But the prognosis was good: donations were monetized to respectable amounts, the various pubs that held special events reported good attendance and above average checks, critical response to the video during and after its airing was positive, and online views were very high.

Boxing Day had been confined to the North East –New England, New York and parts of New Jersey- and the people in charge of the project (I had excluded myself by now except on a need-to-know, consulting level) suggested considerable interest from parties throughout the country to be included the celebration next year. We would see.

The 'Jolly Brexiteer' was also progressing nicely. Conceived as a place to celebrate 'Britishness', I always hoped that there would be a tongue-in-cheek irony to the concept so that 'remainers' (predominantly Londoners and millennials) would also enjoy the experience. And in that spirit, Jenny suggested weekly Euro nights with continental food and drink specials.

Truth be told, the Jolly B was always going to be successful because the concept –along with Jenny and Julia's execution of it- was a welcome, long overdue reinvention of The Pub, a tried and tested phenomenon.

By linking it to the Brexit, we cashed in on topicality to gain tons of free publicity. If we had just said, 'Here look; we've brought The Pub into the 21st century...' the response would have far less dramatic.

But pubs have always been a particularly British thing. Bars, bistros and cafes could -and can- be found throughout Europe. But they're either particularly for locals to the point of excluding outsiders, or have no local community at all. Pubs on the other hand have their

regulars, but with few exceptions, are open and hospitable to strangers popping in.

Julia's VR games were proving to be very popular. People were delighted to 'walk through' darts games or snooker tables as play was going on; they didn't interrupt the games in progress at all, nor did the games take up the space that their real versions would have.

Her tech team was developing a music platform with localized volume levels that would enable customers to dial up or down the level just for themselves so that you could go full volume (and perhaps even dance,) or keep it quieter and engage in conversation. The volume leakage from 'zone to zone' was amazingly minimal.

And among the most popular of Jenny's Brexit creations were her 'Yorkies.' These were individual, muffin sized Yorkshire puddings filled with a variety of ingredients: ground beef with horseradish, curried chicken, veggies, crab salad, prawn with avocado, veal and ham and of course cheese combos. Served hot, warm or cold, their crisp outsides let you hold a Yorky in one hand and a pint of beer in the other: Perfect pub grub.

43. 2019. *'Warm Sound' Zero 7, Mozes. Pale grey jeans; white Henley; white New Balance sneakers.*

When I first got to New York year before, the Irish 'troubles' were in full flood. I'd left London amidst quite a few actual bombings and a whole lot of bomb scares around the West End where I worked.

My office in NY was on Third Avenue a couple of blocks from the British Embassy. Everyday, protesters with their placards marched back and forth on the sidewalk chanting 'Thatcher, butcher, Thatcher butcher...' etc.

New York has a large Irish population, and there were about three or four Irish pubs on each of the Second Avenue blocks behind my office.

During happy hour at these places, you could get two beers for the price of one, and a chafing dish provided free hot food: sausage rolls, pork pies and the like. I had befriended another recent immigrant, a very short, Australian copywriter named Andrew. The prospect of cheap beer and free food every evening was very appealing to us.

Problem was, the patrons and bar staff at the pubs despised the English.

Solution was for me to dig back to my school days in Scotland and affect a Scottish accent.

I'd observed and absorbed several different regional brogues: The fay, liling, middle class Edinburgh and east coast one; the oratorical Lowlands voice (think Sean Connery;) and the almost unintelligible, guttural Glaswegian dialect.

While the Irish hated the English, Scots could pass as fellow Celts.

So I would amuse Andrew with my range of Scotsmen while we imbibed half priced Guinness in 'The Blarney Stone', 'Eammon's Bar',

and 'Father Murphy's'. For some reason, now, during and in between my various concrete projects, I cast my mind back again to Scotland.

My wretched experience at school there had largely soured me to the country, which was a pity.

While I hadn't been back to Scotland in person, I decided to 'visit' it to write a short audio play, 'Wally Dalgleish and his Sheepdog, Doug.'

'Wally..' was conceived as a vehicle for my various Scottish voices. I hired Rae Kantro, a very talented undergraduate from Berklee School of Music who was studying recording engineering and mixing as well as music, and we borrowed the Back Bay studio owned by her teacher, Brian McKeever. The recording and mixing sessions benefited both Rae and me –she got to practice her technical skills, I got to record 'Wally...'- and I dashed Brian a very expensive bottle of Single Malt afterwards.

It turned into a 5-minute piece. There was about 3½ minutes of dialogue, and Rae created sound design and adapted some of her musical pieces to frame and cradle it.

The story was about a shepherd whose dog found something in the fields one day. The shepherd –Wally- thought it might be a piece of valuable metal ore. He consults his friends in the local pub, then takes it to Edinburgh to be analyzed by a geologist. I provide all the voices: Wally, his dog, his friends and the people in Edinburgh.

The recording can be heard here: <https://vimeo.com/308122379>
I shared it with Joe, the animation director friend of Terry Gilliam who had worked on 'Boxing Day' and he immediately wanted to develop it for a series.

I wasn't so sure. It was in my mind an audio piece. I thought it worked by leaving the visuals to the imagination; would animating it strip the rather basic narrative bare? And if it did work, would I be able to keep creating new storylines? And if it did work, and I could come up with stories, would my voice be sufficient to use?

Joe very much wanted to develop an initial animatic and shop it around. He was insistently keen and since my finances –and Caroline’s- were rather bare at this time, I figured it was worth a shot.

Caroline, for what it’s worth, thought that ‘Wally..’ was derivative of Nick Park’s wonderful ‘Wallace and Grommet’ movies. I hadn’t considered that, and since ‘Wally..’ was conceived as an audio piece, I didn’t think they were any more similar than any other pieces featuring a man and his dog. Notwithstanding, I didn’t hold out much hope for any commercial success.

44. 2019. *'Shut 'Em Up ' The Prodigy. Leggings, long T-shirt, cool belt I bought from a local artsy woman.*

I was beginning to worry about money. I'd saved as much as I could without living miserably while the modeling moulah was coming in, and the house was paid up.

But my car was getting long in the wheels and kept requiring things like new brakes and tires and struts (whatever the fuck they are.) The local town taxes kept going up, despite the fact that they didn't provide garbage pick-up or snow plowing and the overall condition of the town's roads was pretty lousy.

And Doug kept suggesting that we eat out, go on trips to NYC, take mini-vacations to LA, Santa Fe and Phoenix in the winter; to Quebec, Vancouver and East Hampton in the summer.

Doug's rent was actually far more than he should be paying for what he got (at least as far as actual accommodation,) and he ended up paying for most of our trip expenses.

But I would insist on picking up the odd dinner and also needed to buy new clothes for some of our vacas' Shit, an ex model can't let herself go to hell; I have high fashion standards to maintain!

Doug and I shared the same financial advisor and accountant but kept our affairs completely separate. Now, however, the accountant suggested that we could both save a few thou every year by combining resources and filing jointly. But I really needed the separation and independence.

A clue to a solution came one morning while Dougie and I were sharing a wake-up mug of coffee.

"Bastards! I've been screwed." Doug muttered as he went through his mail. It seemed a rhetorical gripe, so I ignored him.

"Remind me the next time I accept a job to insist that my fee is paid in dollars not pounds."

“Why? What? Who?” I asked him.

“The first installment of my ‘Jolly Brexiteer’ consultation fee has been paid in pounds. The friggin’ pound just keeps losing value against the dollar –and pretty much everything else.”

“So dollars go a long way when you take them to England and convert to pounds?”

“Hell, yes. The dollar is worth about one pound twenty right now.”

“But isn’t the cost of living there higher?”

“Yes. But not that much higher. If we took our money there, we could live at the same level for much less.”

He went rabbiting on about it, but I tuned out. I had been thinking about home a lot recently. If I took my savings back there, how much more secure would I really be? And would I be able to settle down there and be happy?

One thing was clear. I should pop over for a recce. Hadn’t been to England myself for a few years. I decided that I would go and spend a couple of weeks checking things out. Maybe I’d need a month to get over the initial change and start seeing things from a long-term perspective.

A few weeks later, I announced my plan to Doug.

“I’m going to England for a few weeks. Will you be okay here?”

“Why are you going for so long? Are your siblings okay? Of course I’ll be okay here.”

“Oh my sister is fine but I haven’t seen her kids for ages. And my brother is his usual grumbling self, so he’s obviously all right too. I just thought I’d pop up to Yorkshire and see them. I might drive around the old haunts while I’m there.”

“Hmm. Sounds like you have an ulterior motive. An old boy friend get in touch?”

“You’re the only old boyfriend I have now. Maybe I’ll look for another creaky old Brit to comfort me.”

I flew out of Boston to avoid the JFK cluster. Waiting to board the flight, I was paged to come to the Virgin desk.

“Ms. Middleton? Would you give me your boarding pass, please. We have upgraded you to Upper Class.”

Well that was lovely. I hate those long nighttime flights in coach. I guess someone had recognized me from the good old days and decided I would make a nice decoration in the front of the plane! Now I could wash my sleeping pill down with a glass of bubbly and stretch out to sleep.

45. 2019. *'The Staunton Lick' . Lemon Jelly. Black Jeans; black hoodie; black hi-tops.*

To: RichardB@Virgin.com

From: DougKing@gmail.com

Subject: Jolly Brexiteer et al.

Hi Richard.

Hope all is good with you. I spoke with Julia yesterday. She thinks that they can get the isolated sound platform beta version up in a couple of weeks. Seems they need to install sensors throughout the ceiling of the pub. They'll be close enough together to enable a dedicated though weak signal to transmit sound straight downwards so that it can only be heard in a 4' X 4' area. Of course the area will move with the individuals, picking up their mobile apps' wherever they go to. I asked her how it would avoid two people's apps if they're close together and she said that was what they'd be testing for in the beta version.

Meanwhile as you probably know, Jenny has returned to New York as she has a big catering gig there and feels confident that the chefs in Camden Town can manage the grub alone without effing it up.

As one ex leaves, another arrives. My roommate/landlord-with-benefits, Caroline Middleton (better know as the model, 'Lines') is flying to London next week to check on her roots. She is booked on VA in coach and if there's any way you could upgrade her that would be hugely appreciated: she's a tall girl.

LMK if you need anything more from me at the moment; I expect to see you otherwise in CA for the Greenville quarterly update. I hear they're burning through money out there though perhaps that's an unfortunate choice of verb haha.

BW's

Doug.

46. 2019. *'List of Demands': The Kills. Lucky Jeans; white T-shirt; antique, embroidered vest.*

Back in New York. Jules is staying in London until she and her tech crew have sorted out all the pub-of-the-future shit. She's fine; staying in a nice long-term Air B'n'B off Hampstead Heath, near where Doug used to live.

My food 'contract' is up; they can make their own Yorkies from now on. I didn't realize how much I missed America until I got back. After the first few weeks in London, you acclimatize to the accents and the quaint habits and rituals, and start to get really irritated by the general attitude there. Except for the few bullies –and the Brit specimens are really obnoxious- everyone seems so miserable and downtrodden. They say 'sorry' as a reflex, regardless of whether they did anything to be sorry about.

'Sorry' means 'what did you say? I couldn't hear' (probably because they mumbled, another bad Brit habit.) It means 'you just stepped on my foot' or 'you just jumped the queue' or 'you just backed your car into mine' or 'you gave me someone else's order.'

And the fucking weather is sorry, miserable and downtrodden, too, even though their summers are quite hot nowadays. What with all the damp, they really ought to start installing air conditioning everywhere instead of in just a few, newer, large buildings.

People were very kind, though. And genuinely appreciative of what others do for them (in this case me!) So there's that. And they let themselves go far more easily and more often than Americans. They eat less but drink far more than we do. In fact one of the reasons I decided that I had to get back was because I was having trouble maintaining my weight even though I jogged about two miles every morning.

Anyway now that I'm back, I'll have to find work. I told everyone that I had a big catering job to get back to, but that wasn't true. I'm okay for funds for a few months, but my usual clients have probably found

new caterers. A girl who owns a food store in the Village wants me to partner with her. I might take another look at it.

47. 2019. *'Drinkee': Sofi Tukker. Jeans; Chelsea FC hoodie; white hi-top trainers.*

So my mother leaves London and my 'mother-from-another,' Caroline arrives. Jenny got really irritated here towards the end. She enjoyed coming up with the 'Jolly B' menu items and the first few weeks after it opened, but after that when she was just supervising the kitchen and training new staff, she had time to look around and unappreciate the locals and the landscape.

I'm enjoying life here. The work challenges keep me busy and engaged during the day working with my team and I have a Brit boyfriend who keeps me amused the rest of the time. I can't believe that I didn't spend more time here growing up when my dad could have shown me around. Ted (beau) and I drive to different touristy places most weekends: Bath (beautiful;) Stonehenge (huge let down;) Oxford and Cambridge (lovely;) Hampton Court (my favorite;) Rye (cute.) etc.

Caroline is staying with me for two nights, then she's going to visit her sister in Yorkshire. After that, we're going to Suffolk to for a couple of days at the seaside village where she and my dad first met.

I don't know whether to be worried about my dad or not. He's on his own for a while now and he had got very used to living with Caroline. He usually has some project or other going on but when I texted with him recently, he said there was nothing happening apart from that incredible futuristic city in California and that's a very long-term thing.

Maybe he could join us in Suffolk!

48. 1984. *'My City Was Gone': Pretenders. Navy sweat suit with Chelsea FC badge; White 'Harrison FC' shirt; navy shorts; white socks; Adidas soccer shoes.*

Doug was usually fairly discreet about his football 'glory' days. Yes, he had played for his school team up to the age of 13, and yes he had thought himself good enough to try out for the Chelsea FC youth program. Aside from a brief spell at the school in France, he didn't play any organized football after that.

But one of his work colleagues –Mitch Goldstein- played for his town team in a Westchester county amateur league, and badgered Doug to join the team.

"You'll be a ringer, of course." Said Mitch. "Best to say you're living in my house for a while."

"I hugely doubt that anyone will give a rusty fuck." Said Doug. "And I also doubt whether I'll even make it through the full 90 minutes. I'm not in great condition."

"Ha! But we only play 60 minutes so you'll be fine. Meet me at my house at 9:00 on Sunday morning and we can drive to the game together."

So the next Sunday, and every Sunday after for three months, Doug woke up at 7:00 and drove up to Mitch's house in Harrison.

The first few games went by uneventfully. Doug didn't realize just how out of shape he was. He played flat out for twenty minutes, then huffed and puffed for the remaining forty. Truth be told, everyone on both teams seemed to follow the same energy wane. By halfway through the second half, the games were being played at a walking pace, and ironically the quality of play got far better: people maintained their positions, players had more time to make more accurate passes, and just a short burst of movement was enough to round your marker.

So before the fourth game, Doug announced to the team that he would be playing at a walking pace for the whole first half then,

relatively rested, exert himself at the restart. The strategy appealed to the other players.

They were down by two goals at halftime, but came back to win 6-3. The other team was astonished by the Harrison XI's pace and persistence in the second half, and completely folded.

The Harrison team followed the same game plan for the next half dozen games. They played at a walk for 30 minutes, just absorbing their opponents' harried pressure and giving up as few goals as they could, then turned it on after the orange slices.

They were soon second in the league!

The quality of their opponents varied; there were a few halfway decent players, and many clueless hackers. The hackers were the dangerous ones; several nasty injuries were caused by clumsy rather than malicious challenges. In the second game, Doug had his ankle scraped very painfully by a large man who was way late with a tackle long after Doug had passed the ball.

Neither particularly big nor impressively fast, Doug relied on being quick with his feet, passing the ball sooner than later, and making runs to be in an unmarked position ready for a pass. He could be quite physical holding the ball up, just by leaning back against any player trying to tackle him and this tactic –learned on the fields at Mitchum- worked well.

He scored a couple of goals, and made numerous assists.

The next match was against White Plains the team in the number one position. It featured half a dozen Brazilians.

They were unbeaten and habitually won their matches by six or more goals. The Harrison team was up for it, though, displaying ridiculous confidence.

But as soon as he saw the White Plains players warming up, Doug realized they were doomed. These guys looked like pros, showing great ball skills and intuitive control as they scrimmaged among themselves.

And within minutes of the match beginning, they were up 3-0. The Harrison team panicked. They forgot their rope-a-dope strategy and started running around in frantic circles trying to win the ball and move it up field. Doug kept himself quiet, though, and rarely touched the ball as a result. By halftime, the score was 5-1 (the one Harrison goal was an own goal, scored when White Plains defender passed the ball back carelessly to his goalie who wasn't even looking.)

Doug shifted into a faster gear at the restart and surprised a couple of the Brazilians by sashaying by them. He laid the ball off to a teammate each time, but nothing came of these.

The next time he got the ball, he was roughly clattered into from behind and fell on his face. The ref blew the whistle, and Harrison was awarded a free kick. Nothing came of it. Doug had attempted to tackle a Brazilian twice earlier on. Once he came away with the ball, once the player held him off.

He tried tackling a defender again. This time, the player held Doug off roughly with his elbow and kicked him in the ankle for good measure.

Doug got up slowly. By now he was getting the message: these guys were very good and very physical. Their tactics were borderline illegal, but more to the point, designed to intimidate.

Doug received the ball another couple of times, was unceremoniously bundled off it twice and actually managed to turn away and pass it to a teammate once.

The whistle for fulltime blew. Thankfully. The score was 8-1. White Plains hadn't bothered to score as often as they could.

As the players shook hands, two of the Brazilians who had left their marks on Doug smiled, patted him on the shoulder, and said 'Well played' to him: High praise indeed!

Usually a few hours after each game, Doug was felt stiff and achy. Soon after this game, he could hardly move. Every muscle screamed in pain and he had four or five nasty red marks and very sore bruises, all over his legs and torso.

Harrison played two more matches that season and hung on to 2nd place. White Plains finished unbeaten and won the league by a huge margin. Doug politely declined Mitch and the team's offer to play for them again in the fall season.

49. 2019. *'If you leave me now.'* -Chicago. *Oversized Oxford University Rugby Shirt; white belt; white Keds.*

Caroline and I met up in Ipswich. She took a train from Yorkshire where she had been visiting her family, I took a train from London.

After a long, lazy pub lunch, we picked up a rental car and set off for Thorpeness and Aldeburgh.

Suffolk is a very flat county, still predominately farms and fields. It hasn't changed much in years –so I'm told- the pubs and the people are a throw back.

There's a distinctive local accent, which sounds to me not unlike the 'Poldark,' West Country brogue except that it inflects up at the end of sentences, not down.

The drive from Ipswich took us from highways to progressively smaller roads lined with fences and hedgerows. A couple of times we got stuck behind tractors and other yokel jalopies going from one field or farm to another.

The last road we turned on to was the straight, narrow lane that led into Thorpeness village and to the Dolphin Inn where we were going to stay.

It's another flat, hedgerow bordered road so you can't really see much.

"We used to have a contest to see who could see the sea first. It'll be straight ahead when we crest one of these little hills." Said Caroline who was driving.

"Yeah well that's not fair because you know the road so well." I replied.

"Oh Jesus, it's been years and years since I was here."

"Well fine then."

"I do remember that we cross the old railway line, then start looking."

“Ok well this is an old railroad track we’re going over and –Holy Shit! What’s that?!”

Here’s the Wikipedia entrance for what caused Julia’s exclamation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_in_the_Clouds

The **House in the Clouds** is a [water tower](#) at [Thorpeness](#), [Suffolk](#), England. It was built in 1923 to receive water pumped from [Thorpeness Windmill](#)^[1] and was designed to improve the looks of the water tower, disguising its tank with the appearance of a weatherboarded building more in keeping with Thorpeness's mock-Tudor and Jacobean style, except seeming to float above the trees.^[2]

In 1977 the water tower was made redundant by a mains water supply to the village, and additional living space was created. In 1979 the main water tank was removed to fully convert the building into a house. The building currently has five bedrooms and three bathrooms; it contains a total of 85 steps from top to bottom and is around 70 ft high.

“That’s the House in the Clouds and there’s the sea. I win!”

“Screw the sea, that House in the Clouds thing is amazing.”

“And here’s the Dolphin. God, it looks exactly the same as I remember it.”

Caroline and I checked into the charming, old Inn, where we were assigned a large room with two twin beds. The floor, made from wide planks of old ship wood, stained dark brown and varnished, sloped noticeably. The walls were decorated with old nautical charts and maps. It was charming and not too run down. I found out later that Pegotty’s house, featured in Dickens’ ‘David Copperfield’ was imagined in Southwold, a village just a couple of miles up the coast from Thorpeness.

Despite it’s old world feel, The Dolphin had a very cool menu with several vegetarian options. (One of the reasons Caroline had opted for it.) That evening, we had a good dinner before driving the two miles down the coast road to Aldeburgh and The Cross Keys pub where Caroline and my dad had first met.

Ye Olde Cross Keys as it’s called, was a completely authentic local. We walked down a couple of steps into a half empty room. Locals sat or stood sipping their pints of beer at the bar, while a group of guys played darts.

“The juke box is behind that column.” Caroline remembered. We ordered a couple of beers (Southwold Adnam’s ale) and strolled back.

The Keys doesn’t have a garden to sit in, it has the beach. It was still light out so we went and sat on the seawall separating a narrow bike path from the pebbly slope down to the North Sea, waves crashing and foaming down.

A little farther down the wall, a small group was passing a joint around. Caroline laughed.

“Time standing still. Nothing’s changed except me.”

It was certainly lovely sitting out there as the sun set over the town behind us and stars gradually became visible in the darkening sky over the sea.

We finished our beers and strolled along the bike path for a few blocks before turning down a cobbled street that led to Aldeburgh High Street.

50.1990. *'You Keep Me Hanging On.'* –Vanilla Fudge. *Jeans, blue and white striped button down shirt, dark blue double-breasted wool jacket.*

Ad agencies spend thousands of dollars producing pitches to win new business. If the prospective clients thought about it, they'd know that the winning agency would find a way to charge them back later.

In the case of the National Dairy Board, it was the taxpayers' money we were playing with. I was helping to win the cheese account, ironic since cheese is the one food type I dislike.

Why would the NDB spend millions advertising generic cheese? Because the thousands of farmers whom the NDB represent expect to see some marketing action for their products. The famous 'Got Milk?' campaign was hugely successful by indices of recall and likeability, though whether it actually sold any more cartons of milk is debatable.

What it did accomplish was a desire among the farmers for campaigns for butter and cheese too.

The brief was pretty open: come up with an ad campaign that captured people's imagination and made them feel good/better about cheese.

Several imaginative, overpaid, creative people spent many days sitting around thinking up ideas. One of my ideas centered on the old joke that the moon is made of cheese. One of the ads featured herds of cows, heads up to the sky, mooing.

A kid asks his mom, 'Where does cheese come from?'

We cut back to the cows, this time the sound engineers have appended an 'n' to their calls so that they are lowing, 'Moon' 'Moon'.

How silly was that?

Apparently about the right level of silly: I was asked by the suits evaluating the pitch submissions how I could make a compelling 'pitch piece' for the campaign.

Which was why a few days later, I was on a flight to Houston. I met a mini production crew –videographer, sound recording engineer and art director- at Hobby International airport, and we drove to the office of ex-astronaut Alan Shepard, one of the few people to have walked on the moon.

Shep –as he asked me to call him- was in on and up for the joke. I was going to interview him in earnest, mockumentary style about his time on the moon in general, leading up to the big question:

“Commander Shepard; is the moon made of cheese?”

Shepard was not particularly good in front of the camera; he flubbed answers and all but the most straightforward lines. On a crew break, he went to the bathroom and I asked the videographer if Shep was drunk. He doubted it, suggesting that he was just not very good at what we were asking of him.

“But the good news, Doug, is that he’s completely real and credible. Have your editor cut out the flubs, and you’ll have a good video.”

We went through the same Q&A after Shepard had peed, and had the same footage from a different angle.

Earlier, while the crew was setting up, Shepard had shown me the golf club that he had taken to the moon and hit a couple of shots with. So without warning him, while the tape was recording, I asked him to show it to 'us.' He got up and retrieved the club. I asked him to swing it for us and describe the shots he hit on the lunar surface. He did, perfectly, Apparently he had done that routine on numerous talk shows when he returned from the moon.

After his swings, and descriptions of how far the balls flew with minimal gravity, I asked him:

“Commander Shepard; by any chance, did you lick the club after you had hit those shots on the moon?”

The question threw him. He looked perplexed. But then gave us the response I was hoping for:

“Yes. Yes, actually, I did.....(long pause).....and it was the most delicious cheese I have ever tasted...”

We had it! The perfect reaction; the perfect response; the perfect ending to the teaser, pitch piece video.

I immediately checked with the videographer, and we all watched the playback. In a million takes, we would never get a better one. The camera had even zoomed in slightly, subtly, during Shepard’s pause so that his ‘reveal’ line had maximum drama.

I flew back happily believing that we would have a splendid cheese ad campaign, complete with talking cows –‘Moon; moon.’- and the testimony of one of the few to have been on the moon.

Do you remember seeing the NDB cheese ad campaign?

They went, instead, for a really sickening, anthemic jingle, illustrated with sappy shots of families eating cheese while mothers looked on lovingly. It lasted about two months before the NDB fired the agency and looked for another campaign.

51. 2019. 'At the Border Guy' –Joe Strummer and the Mescleros.
Long, flowy, blue dress.

To: Douging@gmail.com

From: CLinesmiddleton@hotmail.com

Hi Dougie.

How are ya? How's things in Madison? How's Nigel? How would you like to sell my house?

!!

I thought I'd email you first so that you can think about this.

Anyway I'm having an overall good old time back in good old England. Visited my sis and fam in Harrogate which was fine, then my grumpy bro in Leeds.

Then I had a lovely long weekend with Jules in Thorpeness. We stayed at The Dolphin, went to the Cross Keys (Heart emoji!) ate smoked salmon at Orford, played tennis (badly) at the country club, and had a lovely long punt on the Mere.

We went back to London and I stayed with Serena (my old agent) for a few days in her rather posh Chelsea flat. (She must have made a few quid commission off me!)

I feel quite comfy back here and, well, I just think I would prefer to be living here. Also my savings would stretch out better converted into pounds.

How much do you think I could get for the Madison house? Can you chat with a real estate agent?

Sorry to ask you for such a favour; I guess it just shows how close to you I feel!!!

Love

C. XOX

52. 2019. *'This Must Be The Place' –Talking Heads. Khaki shorts; navy blue T shirt; Adidas slides.*

I went through a range of emotions after getting Caroline's email. Then I went through the Connecticut Shoreline real estate listings to see what comparable houses were selling for. Then I called an agent who I'd met at a pub in Ivorytown.

It was a bit awkward because we'd been flirting with one another at The Blue Hound one lunchtime, and she probably thought I was calling her for a date.

She came over on a sunny Saturday morning. We strolled around the house.

"Nice place, Doug thanks for thinking of me."

"It's actually a friend's house. She's in England at the moment but wants to sell."

"But you live here? With her?"

"It's complicated. We used to be married. I moved here a few years ago and needed a roof. She was happy to get a lodger."

"Is this her? She's a model isn't she? I recognize her."

"Yeah. That was a Vogue cover quite a few years ago. It's one professional photograph of her that she actually likes."

We went from room to room, Debbie making notes and measurements.

"So you have separate bedrooms but you both have photos of one another in your respective rooms."

"Yes. We're very fond of each other."

"And very close. She's trusting you to sell her house."

"That was a bit of a surprise to be honest. She went to England to see if she could see herself moving back there. I guess she can."

"And you're going to stay here."

"Well, I've no plans to move back. I flit back and forth for work quite frequently."

"Where will you live here?"

“I haven’t really considered that yet. I guess I’ll find a short term rental and use it to figure out my next move.”

We went outside and looked at the yard. It’s small, quite private, surrounded by tallish shrubs and firs. We sat in the paved porch area and Debbie did some calculations and checked on her laptop.

“How quickly does Lines want to sell?”

“I don’t know. I can ask her; I think she wants a range of prices that she can expect.”

“Well my very rough ballpark guess right now is that she could ask \$400,000. I think she could get that, maybe even a little more, if she’s prepared to wait a few months. You know the seasonality up here; people who have spent the summer in the area often decide to buy towards the end of the summer. The market heats up from late July through the fall. After October, you may as well take it off the market.”

“Ok, well that’s helpful. I’ll tell Caroline what you said and see what she wants to do.”

“And do you want me to start looking for a rental for you?”

“Not until this place is sold. How much notice do you need?”

“Same window as for sales. But we can always find something. Worst comes to worst, you can come and live with me. I’ve got a spare bedroom.”

I laughed. She was flirting with me quite candidly.

“But you know, Doug; I’ve got a feeling you’ll move back to England, too. I’m no psychiatrist, but it’s pretty obvious that you and Lines have something special. You may camouflage it with separate bedrooms and so on, but I bet you’d both miss one another like crazy if you split up.”

I took Debbie to lunch to thank her and told her that I’d be back in touch once Caroline and I had talked.

53. 2019. *'Separate' –Hot Chip. Blue and white striped boxers; white T shirt.*

I emailed Caroline the information about her house and waited to hear back from her.

A day or two later I got a call from my daughter.

“Hi Sweetheart; how’s things?”

“Oh we’re nearly finished here. The music isolator is working as well as it’s going to, so I’m going to oversee the installation and then I’m done. What about you?”

“You heard that Caroline wants to sell the house in Madison?”

“Yeah. She’s found a place here. I’m going to help her move in next week, not that she has much to move.”

“Oh she’s found somewhere? In London?”

Julia laughed.

“She’s renting The House in the Clouds!”

“What? That crazy place in Thorpeness? What the hell is she thinking?”

“We went to see it at the end of our long weekend there and she fell in love with the place. I think it’s just what she needs; it’s pretty quiet –obviously- so she can rest, and she’s going to buy a used car so she can get herself to Ipswich then train to London. She’s actually found a pretty good doctor in Aldeburgh who can monitor her.”

“Monitor her? For what? And why does she need to rest?”

There was a long silence.

“Oh, Dad. I guess you don’t know...”

54. 2018. *'Pioneers' : Mars Lasar. Jeans; Under Armor, Long sleeved 'T'; Hoody.*

There's an app called 'We Croak'. It pings you 5 times a day with a message reminding you that you're going to die.

The messages crib quotes from writers and philosophers: "The grave has no sunny corners." "Begin again the story of your life."

Sources include Emily Dickinson, Pablo Neruda, Henry David Thoreau, Charles Bukowski, Lao Tzu and Margaret Atwood.

Ironically, people who have the app consider it uplifting and inspiring, liberating and de-stressing. And I understand that. Even though I don't want yet another app on my over-worked phone.

A few years ago, at a routine consultation with my financial advisor, he reminded me of his goal to 'take you to 99.' Meaning that his calculations of my savings and retirement spending would enable me to live comfortably –I'm not sure how, or even if I defined this- until I was aged 99.

Then what, I wondered? More pertinently, why not ask me how long I wanted him to 'take me' to? If 89, not 99, wouldn't I enjoy a better standard of living?

As he droned on about the financial strategies and proprietary products which would dictate how my ever-dwindling investments were managed, I began to drift into a fantasy about determining my own 'We Croak' time, and programming my advisers accordingly.

This would require rather detailed pre-analysis. How –and how well- do I want to live? How much or little would I require as age and infirmity started to curtail my expeditions? A very big consideration (or guess, at this point:) What -and how- would health costs vary?

And then the ultimate controlling factor, if I roll the dice wrong and underestimate my life expectancy, how might I be able to prevent miserable, end-of-life poverty by self-determined suicide?

For sure, a one-way ticket to Washington or some other state which permits doctor-assisted self-euthanasia should be part of the package!

I'm not afraid of death. Just as I enjoy a good night's sleep, and – much more rarely- general anesthesia, I believe that at the right time, with the few meaningful people in my life having been forewarned and bade farewell to, I would welcome it.

Ultimately, I believe death to be like a deep, permanent unconsciousness. But is there anything after the big sleep?

55. 2019. *'Red House': Buddy Guy. Jeans; grey NYU T-shirt; grey Merrells.*

The House in the Clouds is a daft folly. The narrower part is four floors high. It contains two separate apartments. It's a tar black on the outside. The wider part at the top looks from the outside like a 'house.' It's where the water tower was originally housed but years ago the tank was removed leaving a large, open atrium space, this is where the living and dining rooms are. They're big enough to fit a pool and ping-pong table. An interior gallery balcony surrounds the space halfway up, and the bedrooms are located off this.

Caroline rented this top space. With lovely views of Thorpeness, its golf course, the Mere (a giant boating lake with many islands, lagoons and 'canals' to explore,) and the sea. it's infinitely superior to the lower quarters. But there's no elevator in the House in the Clouds so getting from the ground floor to the upper suite requires climbing five flights of stairs. Caroline doesn't venture out casually or impulsively.

We're sitting around the spacious living room enjoying a quite spectacular, late summer thunderstorm. Ted and Julia are playing pool, Steve and Sally are twiddling with their phones; Caroline and I are reading. Nigel, just released from the ridiculous 6-month quarantine that dogs entering the country have to endure, was snoring at my feet.

We're listening to a Spotify playlist that all of us made eclectically, with alternating music choices. When the storm passes, I'll drive into Aldeburgh and buy some fish down by the harbor.

The boats go out daily and you never really know what they'll catch. We've enjoyed fresh caught cod, mackerel, haddock, herring, shrimp, crab and lobster. Whatever I get today, I'll pair with a nice Montrachet, a delicious, dry, spicy, white wine to which Caroline is particularly partial.

She's seems to be doing better; at least she's not getting any worse. But the doctors aren't making any promises. So for the present, we live day to day, making it up as we go along.