

Juno

"Things Gone And Things Still Here (We'll Need The Machine-Guns By Next March)"

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The writing between us is beautiful. Some of it is sad. But all of it is always useful and always funny. Even the angry, ankle-biting bits. It would be a shame to lose it all in some fit of rationale. One day you may be glad we chose to keep these letters. They do a better job of telling what was going on in our lives than any songs or photographs. But if you want to put them in the trash then I can't tell you not to. You could always save them in a file folder someplace or cart them around the globe for the next forty years—Occasionally retrieving them for posterity, A wiser and more just future-self scrutinizing the contents therein, with a keen mind, dry eyes and steady hands. You can play "Remember when we were young—" perhaps shaking your head only in pity for who we were when we were the people we are now? You heart long since given out. Or maybe not? Maybe you'll read the letters and your heart will race with joy for having known these times, these places, and those terrible-wonderful people. You will look back in your 70s and perhaps feel stronger, more contented in your quieter years for having suffered this time—the love and frustration, the awe and stupidity written on the pages. A correspondence hidden in the lines of your hands and in the creases of your face. Your blood will boil a volatile mixture of sex and sentimental yearnings. The thing, invisible hairs on your arms will sing a subatomic song—a sub-atomic song—in the near distance a bell will ring. The Mediterranean cruise ship you're on serves tea and biscuits at midday! You will say to yourself, (in that funny sort of parrot-like voice you do so fantastically): "HA! AHH!!! MMM—I like tea and biscuits with jam and marmalade—yeah, I'm gonna get me some." Though 73, you will scoop yourself up with ease and grace in one fluid motion, for even in your old age you will have such magnificent poise and stable connective tissue. The letters will be left to fend for themselves, vibrating with the air. Your son, George, who will be in his early forties by this time, will happen by. Recognizing the scraps of tickly blanket his mother has clutched since

she was a little girl, he will sit down in the deck chair next to yours. He will spy the letters laying there in a tidy heap, humming on top of the grubby file folder in the breeze. Having had secret service training, coupled with his mother's finest investigative genius, he will be naturally inclined to snoop. He'll read the letters quickly and quietly, smartly having the good sense to keep a lookout for anyone who might come upon him. Especially his mum. As he reads, a snake of electricity will wrap itself around his spine. A slow-moving current will run itself out across every limb, through each perfect passageway, chamber and pore his mother gave him. He will look at the dates of the correspondence and his mind will reel, doing the math of your lifetime—putting faces to names and names to places. His guard will come down, no longer able to keep watch over the ship's passengers. On his fingers he will do a quick bit of age mapping, again putting faces to names and names to places. A few things very succinctly will become clearer to him. Like a squirrel foraging nuts, you will return to your deck chair, napkin in hand, jam on your fingers, crumbs on the upper lip, the teeth and gums toying with the goo that was once a biscuit. Seeing your son with the letters will feel like an icicle piercing your heart. Your eyeballs will quite literally bulge from the socket, (more so than they generally do). Despite your instinct to grab the tickly and run, you will rather, quite suddenly compose yourself. You will sit down adjacent and you'll not look at him in the face for many moments. Instead, you'll continue to nibble at your biscuits, while periodically pursing your lips and testing the symmetry of your jaw line. You will keep your eyes downward and your head slightly cocked sideways as though you were a sheepish four year old gazing at the sun from behind an anthill. You'll take a deep breath, and with the tact of a carrot, (as you sort of fidget in your chair), you will make some fashionably wise-ass remark. George will gaze upon you in dismay, feeling such happiness and confusion that he cannot bring himself to speak. In fact, he'll not utter another sound for the next seven years. In this moment, a weight will lift from you. A weight so great it cannot be measured or defined. It comes rising off you in layers, in waves, in levels and frames. The sum greater than all the parts you ever played, all the mates and barmaids you ever tamed. More numerous than all the cells you'd ever last along the way—and more terrifying in it's beauty than any imaginable hell. The sum that is more than you- the divine darkness, the vibration and naked light of your true being. All this will lift. It will collapse and rise like

ashes in a barely visible aura around your entire body. It will flutter in the newly open space within you like a feather-down swirling from a goose upon the take-off. Later that evening, you will die with a smile on your face and love for all things, all people, all places and passing of time through your heart. Most of all, love for your son, because despite the odds he was kind, good and smart. The universe will reveal itself to you in your final tangible moments, willfully becoming a thread in the tapestry of all existence. Look at it this way- at the very least you'll never have to pay rent again. Your son will feel no sorrow at your passing, only respect, only calm. I wish I would have been there to see it, but no, by this time I will have been so many years gone. So yes, do what you like with our letters, if they are lovely and funny, then keep them. And if they are a burden to you, then destroy them. All in love, and all in the memory of the woman you will one day be, my friend.

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