

The End Of The Road

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That's how she phrased it.

The end got much worse after that.

Earlier in time the physician who lived on the island had warned her about the high blood pressure, and the consequences of failing to take the medication he had prescribed. He had given her a publication which revealed the facts about the slow deterioration of the brain through a series of mini-strokes.

The real end had little to do with her judgment of the place in which she had found herself when she made her fateful deduction.

The author doesn't know all he needs to know to flesh out this story, but he does reveal his sympathies for the person he knows and doesn't know.

The real end transpired in a nursing home. She had been unable to read for some time, after one of the more devastating strokes that left her more impaired than the previous ones. Visiting her in this home revealed to the author that she no longer recognized him specifically, and even seemed hostile toward him. Its like she remembered something that was unfavorable, or she felt some kind of guilt over her inability to respond. He did not visit her after that occasion.

To begin at the beginning. We had been 'cruising' in the Pacific Northwest in our Rawson sailboat. At the instigation of those on another cruising sailboat we had sojourned to the island, and while there decided to stretch our legs with a walk, whereupon we were given a ride, after much insistence, in the bed of one of the several ubiquitously beat up Datsun pickups. Upon discharging us from the vehicle, the driver suggested we visit their cabin later in the day.

Things being as they are (it is what it is), we did visit as suggested, one thing leading to another, we eventually were introduced to other occupants of the 'rock', as it is sometimes referred.

One of the occupants was the lady whom this epistle indulges.

It might have ended there.

Intrigued, we returned to the island, in our boat, for further explorations.

In the previous year we had stopped by on our way to Alaska. This following year found us attending the first 'fall fair' at the island's new community center. Amongst those attending was the occupant (lady) we had met before, engaged in a conversation with another. The subject of

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the conversation involved whether or not ‘they’ had found someone to look after their place while they travelled to Mexico. When it was overheard that they had not, the first mate, Charline, volunteered yours truly’s services. Perhaps a very presumptuous thing to do, but the lady had remembered the first mate from our previous visit. She responded by inviting us to visit their place to discuss it with her husband.

As before, one thing led to another. With nothing really decided other than we should stay in touch. Having returned to our home in Oregon, and having not heard a word from the island, the author dared to telephone ‘them’ only to be greeted with the question: “When are you coming up?”

The author arrived a few days later on the ‘rock’, to be transported, in another even more beat up ubiquitous Datsun pickup, to the homestead.

This was the first of many subsequent caretaking adventures thereupon forthwith.

In a way it was aptly characterized as ‘the end of the road’. Of course, on an island, the roads do lead nowhere, even more so than on the continent. It is said all roads lead to the center of things. The author suspects the lady in question would dispute that assumption.

Before and after each caretaking episode a few days were spent with the lady and her husband engaged in many conversations that became more laden with feelings and judgements regarding all things. Some of this is reflected non-specifically in “The Island”. Or “Harmony Heaven”. We also took occasion to visit them as part of our annual cruises into British Columbia.

The author began to regard them as friends, perhaps truer friends than any he had previously encountered. He felt honored and trusted.

It should be mentioned the lady had been a school teacher, he had been a Community College librarian. They also had farmed in the State of Washington before they moved to Seattle. They were the parents of two teen-aged boys. They owned a Cal 20 sailboat that had brought them to the island on a cruise. It is not determined by the author who decided they ought to buy a piece of the ‘rock’, but it had so transpired that they purchased a farmstead with 240 acres, a habitable structure, a dilapidated barn, a washhouse with well, an above ground winter food storage shed constructed of logs. with a roof of hand-hewn shakes, and some circumspect woodsheds and workshop. Also covered with the hand-hewn. That was in 1966, with the Vietnam War beginning to heat up. By 1970 they had moved to the ‘rock’, lock, stock and barrel as Canadian Landed Immigrants. They had sold their home in Seattle, and

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planned to live off the proceeds, their savings, and what they could manage in their new country by farming, and as it turned out, school teaching. They grew their own food, raised chickens, had a Holstein dairy cow, and free-ranged beef. And shared in the bounty of feral sheep.

The author began his 'duties' in October of 1981. He had only recently left the University of Oregon where he had been employed for 20 years. Previously in that same year he crewed on a month-long delivery of a Grand Banks from Seattle to San Diego.

The lady and her husband would be gone for a nominal two months to Merida. With all duties assigned and understood, they departed in another, only less beat-up, Datsun pickup, known as Rusty Dusty, leaving their place in the author's care.

It was a special trust for the author, and it was a treasured adventure. Part of the caretaking involved five White Holland turkeys, a new undertaking by the farmers, much to the doubtful disapproval of the lady, who remembered the problems with disease amongst the turkeys her parents raised in Texas. These were big birds to be fattened for the Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year's festivities, and to be shared with neighbors. The turkeys were not diseased, but they had their beaks and toenails clipped. As it turned out they were fairly docile, except when it came to time for feeding, in which endeavor they engaged with rapacity. Even though they were disabled, when one of them became lame, the other four did their best to cripple it permanently. This eventuated in the caretaker deciding that a dead bird in the freezer was better than a deceased rotting carcass in the pasture. He enlisted the aid of someone more familiar with bird dispatch than himself.

In addition to the turkeys were a flock of chickens, and two young polled Herefords, Patrick and Julio.

Your author thoroughly enjoyed the place and the 'adventure'. During his third year of caretaking, he began his second writing career by starting what would become Notes 🎵 #1, Still Life, Shyla, Olden Times, Jus Prima Noctus, Dog-Eared, Archaeopteryx, Cruise Missile, Karen, Giddy, Mary Miller, NOW, Eminent Domain, to name some of them, and to begin The Island, Knotted Twine, and Apropos Of Nothing. Of course most of this was hand writing, some to be later transferred to type on the old Royal, and eventually to an IBM clone using various writing software programs. It was a huge effort to actually start the process, as it is this very day to write what is being written now.

The End Of The Road might have represented the beginning of the rebirth of the author. Up against the wall, so to speak, confronted by all

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the demons, the only course of action was the mighty pen. He had some advantage when he began *Knotted Twine*. There was a reality hanging in the window. Although he chose not to write a play by play (from here to there expose) of their boating trip to Alaska, the thoughts and feelings became the impetus and framework for the writing. *Knotted Twine* was more ambitious than *Shyla* or *Still Life*, which also were guided by the same dubious factors. For the author, the foregoing has produced the 'what I am', perhaps more so than some later writings, such as *Catherine*, and *A Renaissance In Paradise*.

Enough of the author in this context. This is about the lady.

The same lady of whom is written in *Urary*. *Urary* is a bastardization version of 'Obituary'. *Urary* was intended to become a brief concerning the author's mother, and the author's relationship to his mother, amongst other things, more elucidated by including the lady's predicament, and the predicament of the elderly, into the tale.

The lady's reference to the Road was something interpreted by the author to mean something different than just a statement of fact. Her wryness, and overtone of bitterness, seemed fatalistically impugned. A Resignation to something, not foreordained, but inevitable, nonetheless.

The author imagines her in an entirely different setting, in a more conventional, but upscale home, in a place like Seattle, a liberal minded city. Where all the amenities are taken for granted. In her *End Of The Road* setting, there were not any amenities. Also there was not a clear ethic or culture that bound the community to any known set of values.

In one of her letters to the author, during their more involved period, she described herself and her husband attempting to repair the gutter that had been installed on the lean-to roof of the part of the house that answered the nomenclature of: 'kitchen', where they spent most of their time. To say the least, the lady depicted with a great deal of accuracy, implicit, in my view, the all-thumbs approach to doing anything constructive on the farm, a good deal of information obtained from one of those 'do-it-yourself' books. I would quote the letter word for word here, but the letter is in a stash of belongings in Canada; lost to the author during the Pandemic (perhaps time will allow the addition).

From extant photos, it is the author's opinion that the lady was indeed a lady, not a fulfiller of a farmer wifery. People are challenged in this life. Washing one's clothing on a washboard, after having all the amenities of a modern household, even a laundromat, if that had been the case, would require much forbearance. One might wonder what had happened; or indeed, have wondered if this was indeed the end of the road.

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The well water proved rank, so further improvisation was required; another water source. A garden area needed to be developed.

It was a beginning indeed after the other life had ended.

She grew older at a faster pace, her hands calloused, and fingers yellowed from the cigarettes, and the lining of the visage, craggy like an aged mountain. No longer an urban dweller tending her posies.

However dismayed, not dismayed. Whether through her singular efforts or with her husband's help, she fashioned her surround with a flower bed of perennial greens; an asparagus patch, a greenhouse for transplanted starts, for an extended growing season. Also an entire garden patch for potatoes, tomatoes, broad beans, onions, winter greens, rutabagas, cabbage, and whatever served their palate, and whatever would grow, as well as delphiniums and dahlias. A rose garden, and a rhododendron hedge for a backdrop, as well as a blueberry patch fenced off to keep away the birds. If the rototiller proved recalcitrant and dysfunctional, the spading fork was brought into action. When the equisetum began to take over the garden, she spaded deep and deeper to get at the roots. She also maintained a milking cow, to collect and sell fresh milk to those at the end of the road. In and around all that, she taught at the elementary school eight miles distant, up-island, getting there in the fast fading Volkswagen they had bought and brought home from a trip around Europe. If the Volks failed there was available the really beat up previously mentioned Datsun pickup, a study in itself. The rear brake lines were pinched off. It was unlicensed, uninsured, as were many of the vehicles in the old days. The old days were prior to dope-growing on the rock. When the RCMP learned of the illicit activity they began to raid the patches, and to enforce the law with regard to licensing and insuring vehicles. Civilization had arrived.

The lady was not averse to the enforcement; she felt that 'pot' was an entry level drug source that would be pushed onto children; she was adamantly opposed to this pathway to doom. Needless to say, it became an issue that affected personal relationships, sometimes ending them. Being at the end of the road under such circumstances was more than a challenge to one's sense of equanimity.

The lady was frugal, perhaps having had it forced upon her, under the circumstances that one finds at the terminus of the pathway. There were always pieces of dry crusty toast (remains of dwindled loaves) to found on the open shelf of the warming trivet; toasted on the stove top to keep it from growing moldy, and always ready for a bit of jam.

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But a somewhat classic example illustrates the degree of frugality, wherein a sit-down dinner in the dining room, set at the long oval dining table, to which certain old neighborhood old folk were invited, was to transpire. Most likely the fare, after appetizers, usually a homemade salsa, served on on some kind of cracker, would consist of garden bounty, and fresh killed and roasted lamb, topped off with home made wine and some more or less exotic dessert. In this case the chocolate soufflé had been made earlier in a baking dish, and set to cool and firm up on the sleeping porch. When the time approached for the dessert, upon retrieving the soufflé from the porch, it was discovered that the surface of the dish had been visited by mice. The resourceful lady, perplexed, but determined, and mindful of the potential squeamishness of at least one of her guests, decided to scrape off the whole top of the soufflé, which altered its appearance to such a degree, it would hardly be presentable as designed. She immediately changed ‘course’, rendering the soufflé into chocolate mousse, to be served in fancy goblets; revealing to the author what she had done, asking to forswear secrecy in the whole ‘delectable’ affair. Ordinarily the author would also be of squeamish disposition, but he trusted the lady would not knowingly poison her guests.

It is presumptuous of the author to pretend he actually knows more of the person he attempts to describe. She is mostly revealed through a series of externals. He has discovered in himself a particular lack of empathy for his fellow man. It doesn’t seem to be part of his nature. He has expended too much on self-absorption and cynical philosophizing.

Yet, he hears an inner voice speaking when he hears: *The End Of The Road*.

The author recalls all of those who have left the premises; some of whom have left a small temporary mark, even in their most beneficent or most heinous manner. But how everyone and everything is subsumed in clouds of dust generated in the rush of the juggernaut; all 8 billion headed for the exit. He imagines the book of Jane Smiley his wife reads wherein nearly every character (a great many) is disposed in some sacrificial manner. He imagines writing something wherein all the characters are people he has known, people for whom he felt antipathy, each and every one given the coup de grace. He imagines that is what Smiley was doing. Nobody would write a story wherein he or she would develop a character only to dispose of it.

This lady has left the premises. She is remembered here because she was the one to mutter: *The End Of The Road*. The real end was part of a

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horrifying nightmare where the old decrepitude is warehoused until departure. The author recalls the photos taken by Henri Cartier Bresson in the Sago Lane Singapore Death Houses. He recalls the photos he has downloaded depicting an old person lying in a bed, either dead or dying, with another old person stooped over the unmoving prostrate form. While her departure did not seem so dire, and because she was nearly non compos mentis, one might say it was a blessing; her own mother survived to 103, also without a brain.

Her husband died in their living room, lying on the floor, having fallen from his chair while watching 60 minutes on the tiny TV, being run on AC, generated by the one lung Yanmar Diesel, which had been hand cranked to start by the lady herself. They had just finished eating their evening meal with an old friend visiting from Seattle. His heart had finally failed. The event happened 20 years before her own demise in the warehouse.

The foregoing is written neither mercifully or unmercifully. The rawness, and factuality with which life sometimes transpires leaves us cold.

This is a continuation of the story of how we relate to the aged.

This is a work of non-fiction; any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely intentional. It is not An Obituary, although the application of the term to what you are about to read may apply.

This part of the tale again involves that wonderful person you met in the first half of this narrative (Urary); Charline. It will involve other individuals as well.

Charline went to a hospital to visit an elderly friend, almost eighty, who was hospitalized after other friends of the elderly person had detected a change in her behavior. It was suspected and later learned the elderly person had 'suffered a stroke'. The

elderly person deserves her own identity, so I will give it to her here. She is known as Trouser.

We have known Trouser for 22 years, and consider her our friend; more friend than anything else. If I fail to capitalize Trouser (Trouser) in this text it does not mean I am relegating Trouser to one leg of a pair of trousers. I imagine the plural of Trousers indicates the two legs associated with trousers rather than a pair of trousers (two pairs of trousers [Trousers] anybody? Help!). Bear with me, there will not be much humor found in this tale; rancor perhaps. But I am insuppressible when it comes to wisecracking, even when trying to relate serious matters.

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Trouser, to me, has always been a private and reserved person. I also knew her husband of some forty years who had left this life eleven years earlier. He was known as John. Trouser was wholly committed to John as a partner and as the person who brought her to what she often referred as “the end of the road”. When John departed, Trouser was bereft in so many ways, but continued on silently, trying to maintain what they had accomplished at the end of the road. For a long time she was very subdued, somehow never fully recovering emotionally and spiritually. Eventually, through attrition, she could not maintain what had been started at the end of the road, choosing instead to leave rather than watch it deteriorate further because she could no longer persevere. And besides, living at ‘the end of the road’ meant living without most of the conveniences we have come to expect in the western world, a hardship for someone without much energy or skills to solve the mechanical difficulties that would arise. Trouser would seldom call upon her friends to help her in any way.

When she moved away, it wasn’t that far away that we did not see her fairly often and speak with her on the telephone. In her new circumstances she led a quiet reserved life as before, regaining some of her old self, and not under pressure to preserve something beyond her means. Her new quarters, located on a back street on five acres, was equipped minimally with some of the conveniences we expect in a western world household. She seemed satisfied. She had had offers from her son who lived in a Huge City to come to live permanently with him and his family, which she declined for many reasons, some clear and some not so clear. Being a very family oriented person, her refusal was not a lightly considered matter.

Her back street life might have continued in its own western world way, in its minimal private independent self-sufficiency.

But ‘fate’ intervened.

‘Fate is a cruel taskmaster’.

Trouser was not completely devastated by the apparent stroke. But she was incapacitated in some small ways and in ways that initially would make her return to her private quarters difficult. Trouser had not lost any of awareness or any of her personality. ‘Trouser was still Trouser’, what one longtime friend who had traveled many miles to visit her characterized, ‘but just less of her’. We had also visited her, finding her slow, without much energy, and in a wheel chair. But from the very first awareness of her predicament, she wanted to return to her own private place on this planet.

But there were others, whom at the outset we shall describe as ‘well-meaning’, or ‘well-intentioned’, who began to take over her life. Some of these were ‘friends’. Some were members of her own family. We were not amongst the same category of the well-intentioned. We wanted what

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Trouser wanted. Trouser wanted out of the hospital, feeling she could recover much better in her own space.

All the 'well-intentioned' were in league to make sure Trouser was fit to return. She was moved within the hospital from a bed in a ward to a bed in the rehabilitation part of the hospital. There she was evaluated on a weekly basis. The next step was intended by the 'well-intentioned' to be a nursing home facility where she could be more rigorously readied or prepared for a return to her own quarters. Followed again by a fancy get-yourself-ready halfway-to-home quarters, where you could practice daily living.

We were not privy to the details of this schedule devised by the 'well-intentioned' which included her family members.

On the day of Charline's second visit of Trouser in the rehab ward of the hospital, Charline found herself bringing the patient 'home'. Trouser wanted out; the hospital rehab felt it did all it could do for her. Since it was Trouser's will to leave, after some paperwork she was released in the care of Charline.

Then 'the roof fell in'. Not literally of course. A metaphor.

The legion of the 'well-intentioned' 'hit the roof' with such an impact that it fell, still speaking metaphorically.

Charline was marooned within her indiscretion.

Remember what I wrote about Charline not wanting to let my mother die alone. What does that tell you about Charline? Enough said.

The well-intentioned friends were furious, and the family was P.O.ed. All those well-intentioned thought they had Trouser on track, so much on track in fact, that they could almost forget about her, and the well-intentioned could get on with their own lives.

Well, 'fate' had intervened again. Trouser had found someone to do her bidding. Charline.

The roof not only fell but the shit still remains on the walls after hitting the fan; its almost like the fallout after a nuclear explosion; only in this case brought about by a somewhat helpless old lady. Helpless in the sense that nobody was helping her to get WHAT SHE WANTED. The well-intentioned were getting what they wanted.

Of course, many of you are familiar with these altercations between and amongst the well-intentioned and the doers in this life, especially as regards what to do with the old folks.

What to do with old folks is symptomatic of a host of social ills; ills engendered by too much and too many. No really useful purpose is being served by anyone of us, but here we are, all 8,000,000,000 of us; just out of the womb, just about to croak, with a lot of in betweens. What is a social ill? A social ill is an unresolved human problem. Not a problem of what to do with too many dogs or cats, but almost. Drugs, drunk driving, youth shooting up the place; gee, lots of others

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promoting and trading in violence; celebrities and politicians becoming assholes; and what to do with old folk, like problem children or social misfits (social retards), or miscreants; or the stupid, lame, and blind. And what to do about broken marriages and dismembered families. The Human Condition assails us.

When you have an old folk on your hands who has fallen by the wayside, but continues to breath, your humanity is usually suddenly called upon to do something, especially if that person is a family member, a loved one, or even a friend. Many of us are caught in these circumstances mid-stride; that is, we are going somewhere in our own lives. We have bought plane tickets to Shangri-La, we were putting a new roof on the house, or we were planning to watch the last episode of some TV epic; and maybe we had just sat down after a hard day, and were about to kick off our shoes when the phone rang. And some of us have just had a Bad Day already in the stock market or with the price of gold.

‘Life isn’t fair’, I have heard it said. (Buggerrall).

We each respond differently. As family members we might have already arranged things by acquiring the power of attorney, or having obtained a medical directive from the older family member.

Many even have arranged for the disposal of the remains of what had been a family member. Life goes on.

Thing is, what do we do with our sense of obligation, our common humanity, our guilt, our being inconvenienced; can we play that last hole of golf before we have to do anything?

Well, with Trouser some things were in place before hand, like the power of attorney, and perhaps the medical directive that says if I’m a vegetable, don’t keep me going on life support.

When Trouser lost control of her body; that is, when something went wrong, and sensed by a friend, who eventually became one of the well-intentioned, she was rushed off to the hospital.

A stroke, which greatly enfeebled her, but did not destroy her. What to do? Those with the power over her life had decided to follow the warehouse approach; I call it the warehouse approach. You turn over the ‘victim’ to the social services available to deal with old folks in trouble. Without their consent. Without their consent.

Intrinsically there is nothing wrong with the warehouse approach, especially if one is ill-equipped to deal with a fallen victim. And especially if one is very busy in their own life, and cannot deal with the victim, loved one, mother. It’s a very plausible solution for the decision maker. Again, without the consent of the victim.

Well, the victim is in no position to make any decisions. Falling down deprives you of your freedom; the well-intentioned take over.

Oh! Yes, the well-intentioned pay lip service to the notion that all individuals, regardless of their incapacities, should be allowed their own

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choice in how they are disposed, handled, abandoned, or even warehoused, or not warehoused. But the well-intentioned cannot deal with the appearance of things, the appearance of not having done all they could in human terms, even though they do all they can in what they view as practical terms. Very often these very same well-intentioned turn into, for the lack of a better expression, Assholes.

They meddle in ones life for your/her own good. They become wise counselors, full of hand-wringing plausibilities.

Then there are the others, advocates of the victim. Some might even be considered bleeding hearts; impractical, irresponsible meddlers.

“If she wants to die on her front door step, dragging on a fag, who are we to interfere?”

Some of this contingent are viewed as suckers, easily manipulated by the victim.

Others are completely indifferent. “Everybody has to go sometime.”

The first line of defense, the hospital, claimed it had done all it could, within its stated purpose and function, to help Trouser. And Trouser wanted out. Charline, again, one of the caring contingent, who responded to Trouser’s request for deliverance, happened to be present when the hospital was making its declaration, and when the clarion echo of Trouser’s sentiments were resonating within Charline, decided to whisk her away to where Trouser wanted most to be. Alone. But Charline, the famous; have I not already made her famous for what she might do with her human capacities, did not leave her alone. She stood by while Trouser stumbled around in her aloneness.

Many of the well-intentioned asked “Who the fuck does she think she is?” “What’s she gonna do if Trouser falls?” “Is she gonna stay with Trouser forever?” “Sucker!” But not all. Others supported Charline for doing what they imagined they would have done. Perhaps in their own experience they knew of others who had been warehoused against their will; or perhaps their sympathies were impractical resolutions to a modern dilemma of what to do with the old folks. For some reason or other we humans have a very difficult time putting our money where our mouf is. Only Jesus Christ possessed the magic to raise people from the dead. His job was easy; the rest of us have to stick it out, that is, live with our decisions. Many of us want to become involved; only later, not today.

Then others who wavered in their commitment thought it would be best if Trouser was left alone, because Trouser wanted to be left alone. If she wants to left alone then I really don’t have to get involved, I don’t have to answer to my own compulsions to do the human thing; I can sit right where I am, and leave Trouser alone because that is what Trouser wants; I support her in her wish to be alone. I’ll visit her when I get around to it, when it is more convenient.

Old folk, social ill.

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You already know how I operate. When I visited Trouser while Charline was still in attendance, I observed Trouser's laborious plodding, her brain devising things for her laggard body to do. It appeared to me that some one should be close by. Perhaps the hospital could do nothing for her; perhaps a nursing home could do nothing for her; perhaps the fancy halfway warehouse with others looking after her would have been an OK alternative. It was clear that the only person who could help Trouser was Trouser.

Her body had to 'heal'. Trouser's body had to relearn many simple tasks. In some ways it was like watching a toddler learning to walk, to get the hang of it. But toddlers are little pieces of rubber; when they can't get it right, and fall, they bounce right back up, perhaps bawling; frustrated. Of course, Trouser would not bounce, so she could 'ill-afford' to fall. The toddler might sustain a bump on the noggin once in a while, but Trouser could not so sustain; more than likely she would be rushed to the hospital to languish further in her horrible aged predicament.

I know I can do nothing but commiserate, as I did with my mother. I could do only so much with my mother. Society is willing to do only so much with all the abandoned old people. They are on their way out, dragging their parts after them. There is nothing we can offer to uphold a quality of life. Charline talks of a 'quality of life'. She and I tramped the halls of nursing homes and halfway houses. They mostly smell of disinfectant and urination. Their linoleum squared floors are polished, their hallways wide with rails; their walls covered with scenes depicting Elysia, the ceilings, some beaverboard tiling; all this drab fare painted in a lackluster institutional coloration, emphasizing what we feel, from the minute we are born, in all the institutions we have entered. Schools, colleges, hospitals, court houses, even churches; and even the ticky-tacky of our mass-produced homes, perhaps metaphorically identified as jails.

Yes!, "Quality of life". Where a person moves around in their own comfort zones, with all the things in place, all the memories and set-pieces that might bore someone else to-death. I know I have to go soon, although I cannot dwell upon the subject. I keep at it, building, gardening, watching the orchard grow, writing; staring at the sea; my wallpaper, the sea; always changing, moving, harboring its mysterious properties to attract and charm. I hope that when I go the 'quality' will be there; I will be sitting surrounded by my wallpaper, the sights and sounds will close over me; and though dead and gone, I will imagine I am there forever. Let no man, let no well-intentioned, let no bureaucrat interfere. Let me live long enough to read those sealed journals of Sylvia Plath. I know that is a lot to ask. That's ten more years. I would be eighty years old. Sylvia would have been eighty years old in 2013.

In the meantime I often fritter what little time remains. I even persist in annoying others with righteousness. Often one's dealings with others bring on fits of righteousness. Often these others are made of diminished

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character; they will only go so far in honoring their commitments, their bargains, their deals with their fellow

man. So one does battle with those of diminished character. One stupidly persists on his side of the argument, wasting away the valuable hours. Intoxicated with humanity. Possessed; the brain muddled, while the wallpaper scintillates before one's very eyes.

Yes!, my mother and Trouser. Feeble old folks; there, with the grace of You Know Who, will go I. Let me go with all my dignity. Do not bring me low with your intentions to do well by me, to make sure I am not an inconvenience to the rest of you. If I am to become just another one who will pass on in an indifferent Universe, into an indifferent Eternity, let me suffer with the indifference on my own terms; allow me the displeasure of your feigned concern. Perhaps I imagine your indifference; it may even be simpler than that; you may not even be aware enough to become indifferent; a blessing!?

Me, I am not so indifferent, as this will attest. But I can do only so much, I will do only so much; anything beyond involves too much of me that takes away from what I am. I am, I am. How else to say it? A surfeit of meanness sitting in his wallpaper, being what it is that life has installed and instilled in me. Charline says I should not apologize, although that is what I feel inclined to do.

The perorations, the appeals to my humanity began when I was a toddler, admonishing me to think of the other person, the other person being sometimes my mother, or my brother, certainly my father. Very often me was neglected entirely with my concern for others, but not for very long. I would sneak away into myself when I could, not to be dislodged by any peroration or appeal. However, after a youth spent with such admonitions, I became a cripple, limping along with my barely disguised humanity. Because I thought of myself as a human, I wanted what humans get as humans. I wanted humanity. And when I don't do the humanity thing, I feel I ought to apologize for my selfishness. A cripple apologizing for his limp; my corrupted humanity.

I know you are wondering whether this Charline person is as 'goodie' as she seems. Let me put it this way. If you were in need, she would be there. Does she have her faults? Yeah!, when the well-intentioned misunderstand her and undermine her, when they belittle her, when they attack her, or do not even want to speak to her, then she has to listen to me repeating after Herman: "By how much more pains ye take to please the world, by how much the more shall ye ever go thankless." Then she feels better. She's not only well-intentioned, she is a good kid, a doer, no advance press about her concern, just in there getting muddy while the roof caves in. If I want to stay just stuck to my wallpaper she will see to it that I do.

As I write, the tale is incomplete. Trouser must survive in order to vindicate herself and Charline. It would be sad if the well-intentioned

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were vindicated; some might even consider hauling Charline into court for interfering; for assuming a risk not within her prerogatives. A punishable indiscretion, like negligent homicide. Of course, that is a stretch. But these days, you never know about the reach of litigious righteousness.

And even after that had passed, would we be any closer to the humane, truly humane, solution to the aged? Could we drop everything we were doing to serve those who are about to leave?

Often we breath a sigh of relief when they make their exit. They, and we, have lingered in a limbo between life and death. Somehow this becomes an endurance test for our humanity. And when they do pass on, a great weight is lifted.

I did what I did, and I do what I do. Do these define the limits of my humanity? Have I set the standard of concern for those that would foolishly feel they had to deal with the burden of my exit?

Charline knows her own mother's exit will be a test of her humanity. I believe if I am still around for that occasion, I would be without a wife, so preoccupied and dedicated would she be. She denies this of course, and regards the prospect with some dread. But, if we know Charline by her deeds, we know where she will be. Already her mother feels comfortable knowing that Charline would do everything she could to honor her parents wishes; to live and die at home. Charline's grandmother died in her own mother's home. A deed done. Living and dying at home requires a great deal if the exit is a prolonged and lingering affair.

Charline almost bitterly asked, "Who will be there to look after me?" She already suspects I will be long gone, a fact that saddens me; alone, alone, alone. But one never knows; hopefully she would find another as companion. All idle conjecture of course.

There is no humanity bank, or love bank, where one can deposit humanity or love, albeit, as surety against the future. There is only the other kind of bank, where all that one is or was, is converted into a medium of exchange, but which cannot procure either humanity or love.

As you can readily observe, non-fiction sometimes reads like fiction. To further elaborate on this quandary, allow me to reveal the inner workings of a logic peculiar to bureaucracies.

It has been opined by those operating the hospital in which Trouser found herself that the first three months following a stroke are critical in terms of the success of a recovery; recovery being non-specified. Laying around in those first three months would be inadvisable. Of course, from the beginning Trouser felt that being in her own home would speed up any recovery. After three weeks in the hospital the hospital staff decided it could not do anything more for Trouser. That meant that part of her recovery was terminated. OK Doakay Hospital, I'm outta here. As mentioned the next part of the recovery was

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intended to take place in the warehouse; instead Trouser skipped that part.

It has also been opined that an individual living in their home is in a much better situation for the individual, and the state. The bureaucracies are greatly relieved when the individual ceases to be a burden to the state, all philosophies and opinions aside. BUT, once you have broken the thread, getting any service from the state is, well, what is it really, a kind of waste of time, regardless of the prevailing philosophies. Once you have broken the thread you have assumed responsibility for yourself. Even though the first three months are critical, don't count on the bureaucracies to make sure that you receive what it is to optimize your recovery. If physical therapy seems advisable, you had better make sure you stay plugged in, because if you request it from your home, where everybody agrees you ought to be, you might have to wait several weeks. Well, that does not fit in with the master plan for optimizing recovery. The state does not object to the individual hiring private physical therapists. The state wants to get rid of you so that it does not have to serve you. Even though the state benefits in terms of cost and in terms of bed space by having you located in the home, and even though it arguably speeds recovery for the individual to be there, the state has washed its hands of pursuing the effectiveness of assisting or implementing recovery. The state inadvertently, perhaps unwillingly, looks after vegetables that do not have any chance of recovery, while those with the better chance of recovery are left to their own recognizance, without the support of the state.

What I write here has been classed as non-fiction because it really happens, whereas it sounds like fiction because all the sense of logical progression is ignored.

Last Entry May 11 2005: I woke this morning realizing I could have and should have been kinder to my mother. I walk by her photograph everyday without looking at it, just like I lived in the same town seldom visiting her. I visited her more in the nursing home which wasn't very often. And she died in the nursing home, while her son was off tending his soul and being creative.

Charline is the really empathetic, thoughtful, and kind person who was there;*

**all other expletives not yet manifest in the human lexicon.*

Your author should leave well enough alone. He is prone to offering judgments with regard to his work. Buy he feels he has revealed enough of himself to apprise any reader of his substance and credibility.

