

THE EQUALIZER

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A GUIDEBOOK TO SAFE HAVENS

It was long past the middle of the afternoon when our driveway begins in Glen Cove. The years passed. Adam joked freely with Rosie. The babysitter, on the other hand, was stolen by Gypsies and not heard from again. Interspersed throughout Adam's life were other events. Bucky progressing with his painting. Bucky shaving his beard and dressing more European. Adam was nevertheless not contented. The daughter of simpletons, Buffy arrived and told her story. No dear, we say, 'on the horns of the altar' is a good thing. You're thinking of 'dilemma.' Like when you cut yourself, or how you escorted aunt Amy to the garage with the object of putting her in her Plymouth Reliant. Nearing ninety, she was often helped to ride in some conveyance. We'll have more views tonight on the moments of innate disconnectedness, as Buffy hasn't yet told Adam she's with child. And no one's trusted her since she mentioned that movie at the film party. That's all, except for the orchestra that's following us around. I'd prefer more intimacy, Bucky said, maybe a quartet or something. And the guides as well are jaded, though picturesque. They're expecting a letter from France, in French, they say, visible from windows, porches, and loggias. Other than that it's all just geology. The evening wasn't a great success either. The light was rotten. And the best view was from the bathroom. It was hard going, with Bucky and his easel taking up so much room. And with the orchestra and all. What's more, we had no idea why we were going up it, Bob and Carol added. A rather boring couple, we toured them all afternoon with no respite. Later it was decided we'd go for a nice walk in the fog. And this time we'll do some cantering.

HOPPERVILLE CITY LIMIT: WHEN SHE LEFT

She was 21-years-old when she left her adoptive home in Kansas and headed to Missouri, and it broke his heart when she left him for good. It's too quiet, and I can't stop thinking about her. When she left—with an inappropriate silver tankard as a parting gift—it was clear that she was going to become a very high flier indeed. I would have liked thunder when she left, given how the book's saucy seniors mirror her own search for love in later life. Some time after that she meets a troubled young man named Bucky, which changes her life. And I would have taken care of her the rest of her life had she stayed, but when she left she took responsibility for herself with her. And then she's in love with the most unexpected person, much to the surprise of her family. When she left, she formed long shadows across the floor. And I want to talk to her all of the time. I stood there for some time thinking that there must be something I can do to help. She was with her friends last night in Chico and I just wish I was there. The kids teased me for a week and then quit. I know nobody thinks that this should matter to me, but she was very important in my life. Men who remember her all agree that she always made her own bed every morning, but had a habit of taking an ashtray or towel with her when she left. She was quickly distracted from her problem when she left the shower. He had already come out of his bath and was fiddling with the DVD player. She says that she protested, that she ran out of the bedroom crying about love, but they convinced her to come back in. When she left St. Catherine of Siena, she appeared to be unaware of where she was and what had occurred in the car. When she left, Adam reportedly mused aloud whether she was old enough for the job. It's high summer in Hopperville. And I just can't help but feel she's going to forget me.

A GUIDEBOOK TO YOUR LITTLE WINNING STREAK

It's been several years since I began leading the life of the gentleman enthusiast, there on the balcony with blinking lights across the horizon. And our travels have been far and buoyant, with interesting cocktails for all concerned. The depraved and boozy people, as they say. In fact, their commentaries are elegant on the subject. And they say Hopperville's partly unreal, though which part they're still debating. No doubt it's the weather. It's like that sometimes, the way we sound a little tinny in the labionasals. Or the way complaining about our poverty seems to be for them a habit. And Jhané's jealous, of course, she's been trying to cultivate a habit for ages. I even brought myself a glass of water once, she says, and this just doesn't cut it, as I sat for over a half hour bawling my eyes out, and it's still no use. It's been several years since I began writing all this down, amid a mass of brilliant, almost psychedelic prescriptions. I'm a talented writer. I can even write while walking. They've seen me do it several times. And I stared at the void once myself. It didn't do much good. And now I've gotten to the point where I can meet no more people. Oh, I say, excuse me. I think I left something on back in the Reagan administration. And the man in evening dress close to the hors d'oeuvre tray, but concealed from us by a bit of fern, yes, you too . . . and the wreck in the fishbowl as well. Anyway, don't pay the ransom. I think I've figured a way out.

A GUIDEBOOK TO LOCAL COLOR

A small-time flop of a used car salesman and a bevy of baby birds are interested in model aeronautics. I think so at least, as this model plane enthusiast very carefully is building his plane out of microfilm. An eccentric, to be sure, he has an enormous mouth with strong, dangerous-looking teeth. And then there's Jhané. A proper librarian, she set out for the once proud city of Nebuchadnezzar. She's a vegetarian, and spends much of her time floating in the river with her nostrils and eyes just above water. This is truly a remarkable feat of native engineering, we thought, from a respectable distance away. A city mouse and a country mouse, we've no intention of staying long. But don't worry, this bug-eyed, open-mouthed piece of ill-temper's only Chester. The pathetic little urchin's being taken by his father to the Niang-Niang festival, where one boy holds a handkerchief to show the force of the air, while another boy protects his ears from the noise. The enthusiast is undaunted, though, turning a sort of ghostly blue of unexplainably varying hues. It has to do with the sea, the librarian said, still hoping to see the bead-stringers of Venice, and other new things in the near future. Things are different there, you know, they have water fountains in their bathrooms. A pleasant pastime, we acknowledged. You'll notice us on arrival, we're the ones looking out of the windows, up at the sky. Blinking.

A GUIDEBOOK TO FINDING THE CITIZEN

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To raise cash, we all tried a variety of measures. That, and large herds of squirrels filled our daily conversations. The car shop. The malt shop. Later a guy's coming by to make an offer on my collection of Elvis memorabilia. Things are looking up. Maybe the neighbors will put the gnomes back out, and Rosie will have something to dress up. And Adam called again to voice his opposition (who's anything but a discerning gardener—a philistine, rather). The rumors help, but we're already assuming there'll be mass extinctions, of course. And why not? More than a third of the class believes the value of a life depends on action. Such a change may be global, Mr. Cloppart whispered from the hedges. No, I can't talk any louder, he hisses through the branches, they'll hear me. And I don't know where I'll be later, I'm awaiting directions. But sure, between now and then, a drink perhaps? We hated to do it, but we just had to. Wish me luck, Rosie called, filling her tumbler. It may be a flash of light, or just good planning . . . something, anyway, holding things together. And it seems that every February she had offered up a little prayer to no one in particular. With that, we were happy at last, and could all relax and be someone else. For a welcome change, Rosie added, from behind the fake moustache. And anyway, the pony suit didn't fit, and Adam hated the children calling him an ass and wanting rides. You can call him money hungry, but he prefers fame. And her father never really liked her much, or him. So where are they? Rather ask, where are you? Hell, where's anybody?

A GUIDEBOOK TO ORGANIZED TRAVEL

Even the accordion file of my failed relationships would do. While there, you'll notice that paper napkins are as good as snow for most projects. Most taxidermists believe that about plastic eyes as well. You just pour freezing cold water on them at the turn signal and things will work out fine. It's all in what we refuse and what we accept. Right now, for instance, I'm refusing ballerinas and tomorrow. I'm accepting my pockets. And pockets remain spartan. Behind the waiting room and the water fountain, the face behind the line of faces is realizing itself slowly, but without much effort. Defined by the mirror, Rosie flies into a rage, and then goes off to operate a small fruit stand on the dark side of HWY 1. It's such a long way to fall. And to butter the dark side of her sandwich. A Dutch newspaper is lying around. Obviously, someone was reading it at some point. Maybe recently. In Dutch. The sun through the room is vatic as well, I suppose. Describing your circumference. Some implicit longing. Today, we're delivering something of real value to American families. So we, and the clodhoppers, take a coffee break, defined by cough syrup. We've decided that living with support groups is what made America great. Out there somewhere, they're eating from cups, while the mirror hovers behind the bartender. It's a simple concept, but a lot of math and physics goes into the preparation. Children remain sheepish, in their little rooms. Defined by the dark side of her tea party, I'm thinking about the prairie states. To compete with her mirror inside, or to finally arrive at a state of mirror, windows remain self-loathing. It's what all books say, sort of. While pockets remain treacherous. Pockets remain federal. Dreamlike.

THIS IS WHERE I GET OFF, PLEASE (HOPPERVILLE BLUE LINE)

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The pioneering life story was in full stride and the past was wearing off, as Mario & Irene's divorce plans were looming. We thought maybe we could still be different from what we've become, so we changed our long-distance providers and brands of soda. We even started calling it pop. There was nothing to warn us of the trouble to come. Well, maybe there was, but we seldom bother with such niceties, here between inclinations. And neighborhood kids are constantly being called home by their mothers. As well the birds are constantly *en masse*. It's all part of our new severe economy. And the birds are full of thoughts in different directions. Irene looks skyward. There's a great old memory there somewhere, she tells us, over cokes. It seems like a good time to become scarce, as she's wondering just how many more junctions she might have in her life. Having a stake in all these people, as she says, defining her terms, in this world of little fixes.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE EXAMPLE SENTENCE

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The happy mountaineer from Sherpa greeted us with a hearty corpora that we couldn't resist, caught as we were in the easy book on it by Hamilton, in agreement with Locke, that "literature" as expressed through novels, plays, or poems encouraged Paganini for years. I'll take an existing one or, if you're in the mood, a new one, Michael told us, and we were off in the distinction that Hardy and Semino make between literary texts on the one hand, and larger lakes and trees that circle the town in summer, on the other. The son and the daughter were fighting in Wal-Mart. The grown son saying, She's always given everything. And so we thought maybe a very short one (1-2 example sentences), which would be a nice counterpoint to the most of them and maybe could comment on the very situation, would be in order. You might not be in the mood with the semester starting, of course, even as we had reasons for the things we did. It's one of several premonitions where gnats are flying around the strawberries. I had to wave my hands back and forth over them like this, Jenny said, waving her hands back and forth. It made me not feel hungry at all. Or perhaps it's one of several versions of the same premonition, the easy-listening version of things that were difficult to get through. Still, we got through them, and it helped, covered with all these guidebooks. Now that it's over, the one for emergencies is leaving soon, telling us that others decide what we're worth, so we should stop kidding ourselves. It leaves us feeling a bit less than the sum of our parts, asking questions like, How many questions can fit in a telephone booth? And, What's a telephone booth?

A GUIDEBOOK TO OPERANT CONDITIONING

I've watched what goes on in this place. I've seen things. And I think I'm noticing a trend. It always seems to happen after too much has already happened for anything more to happen, that's all. Take the Clopparts for example: his big nose and her big nose and their children's big noses are going out, pursuing the shape of eating chicken. I may be paranoid, but I may not, Mr. Cloppart says, though no one is asking. And then the hippos, sheep, and sycophants come sidling up on the left. It's now necessary to make a choice. Turn it over and see what's under it, little Chester says, hopefully. The next day he's in biology class thinking only of himself. They're aiming for discursiveness, rationality, and side dishes, like the rest of us, so it's doubtful whether the danger could've been averted. And their little dog too, the class decides. These people here before us, though secure in their drive to the Chicken Shack, are beginning to be aware of the several ways in which plot has failed them. An abundant absence of things going on, they think. "It was sultry during the whole week." That'll do to start, but what about their daughter's difficulties at the dance? There's a fruit-stand just around the corner. And your drunk uncle Willy. How goes it, old feller, you say, not to mention the odd mountebank on the left. It may have been the postman. It may have been any of us really, depending on various uncertain parameters. In much the same way that characters from childhood tend to come back as bell hops, busboys, and cigarette girls. Though they may just be look-alikes. Maybe we shouldn't say anything more about it. And holding hands . . . yes, that's it, there at the peephole, resolving to live in the absolute.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THEIR CORE OBJECTIVES

Most of us are in agreement on the head of a pin thing. It's an act of friendship. Still nicer if you do drop by maybe, they added, handing out flotation devices. And the rocks, and the terrible surf. But almost everyone has despaired of philosophizing by now, and no longer like it. Please ignore the threatening gestures as well. Two events of crucial importance then occur:

- 1) The air's getting heavier in the afternoon.
- 2) There are a lot of bikinis and snorkels.

They're really a lot like their times, especially when they wear the matching swimsuits. And I don't know how I got into that one, Jenny called from the deck shower. We observed, once or twice from the overlook, that she was making progress. Yet there are other epiphanies. The hang-glider and Mai-Tai, for instance. And the tidal surge. It's all about scheduling: the point's to get the people from the patio to the dock, partly because it helps move them along, and partly because it makes me feel young. So we're really not such strangers after all. But for Rosie it was all love, love, love— Not to be outdone, Adam decided to follow the shoreline until he could think up something better. It's been some time now, but we're keeping our desire and towels ready, as the sun's setting in flakes against the breakers in the middle distance. And some orange clouds. And some gray.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE HOLLYWOOD ENDING

That's really not it at all, we thought, as the credits were rolling. Cracks and fissures made their appearance everywhere. And it seems a little short, back where the birds were circling. Though the window will be open for some time, and wonders never ceasing. You'd think so, but it's time to pack up, they say. It's actually quite terrifying, as one might argue for a whole different experience of romantic settings, and more flexible seating. Ah, yes, and then it's off to Skaneateles, in buckskin and feathers . . . where, between the trees there were sometimes rivers. That's not all though: The Love Interest, for one, was still hoping for the day Harlan would return to wipe away her tears of sadness. And a moon in the sky's a moon in the lake. Remember that? We look at each other every night. Verve, Harlan would say, if only he'd return. I could drop this wineglass if I'd a mind to, she says. And several things that enhance you as a physical person into the near dark. Things only change back at the ranch. And Rosie's new boyfriend brings a diverting sub-plot to the Sunday family dinner. But she's not sure, as she's never been sure, as she's continually stolen and rescued, influenced by the personality of her benefactors and by this feeling that one is dying when one isn't. And all our broken hearts as well. Yes, that, but saying you don't want to go isn't acceptable.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE LIKELY STORY

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. . . which eased them into the fine October night. It's to be hoped we'll have an open art spirit, we say, glancing down at the costumed proletariat. With a frosty look, Rosie departs for the reception room. Dealing with repressed feelings, no doubt. Despite our objections, she had renewed a romance with Martin Jocosé who was bleeding profusely. I can still do a really good imitation of Eva Peron, he says. Maybe, but the future's your biggest problem, the tour group thought. A titter went around the charming town to the south, where they were beating their plowshares into Cadillacs. At about thirty feet to the right, we've the ruins of a colonial building on Tuesdays and Fridays. Then commence the natural rolling hills, the bargain videos, and other artifacts of the wireless revolution, the peasantry reminds us. Which is a good example of pleasing masses simply treated. Others dive directly into a hallucinatory present. And the stucco and the walls are one, Martin remarks, cinching the tourniquet out on the balcony. The universal usefulness of this needs no emphasis, as we're suited to these warmer climates. And then we're choosing numbers as the dancing couples trace the contours of tighter and tighter circles in the hall.

AN INCH EQUALS TWO HUNDRED & FIFTY MILES (HOPPERVILLE MAPQUEST)

It was our first journey to the interior, so we decided to skip the formalities and just take a bath. The locals were full of questions, like what particular sort of ignorance is the cause of our particular type of failure? And what excuse is there if we ever again make this sort of error? So we work toward the epiphany as our new goal, and they come along behind. Good heavens though, look at that flock! Not if I have my way, Rosie replies, knowing she'd come to visit or to perhaps bury her grandmother. We lose a lot of grandmothers here. It was our first journey to the rich, wild epic. It's a pretty path, tempting many a stranger to climb it. Bordered by teeth, the bank itself is laid out to a large bubbling cauldron with cement walks. Come on a Saturday, the villagers had said, after basketball. And you do take quinine, don't you? And where in the world can my butterfly net be? The fools, said the announcer, though not without a certain admiration. Hardy soul, he made a step toward us, and suddenly, with one leg in a patch of darkness resembling shadow, fell into quicksand up to his thigh. We novice travelers can't be sure what he's doing, but we can guess enough to see a theme topic. That was on our last journey to some other world of hope and glory. Something for "dear diary," at least. These opportunities don't last forever, you know.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE LITTLE LANGUAGE OF LAST THINGS

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Hello, we say—*hellohellohello*, we say—by rounds. Fine really, you could say, but you don't have to. We could sit over there at my latest table. So how are you, and how are you? Coffee? Save some room for cream? So what can you do, the whole café full of inconvenient emotion (not to mention ebon & flaxen)? Sure, there's this thing that'd really help them out, but of course they won't listen. And it finally gets done, but by then it's mostly only numbers anyway, eh Frenchie? She'll never believe this. Okay-okay, so we spent all evening with pistachios and each other, and not a tree to shake a stick at, as they say. It's a hot-blooded world of very simple occupations. And pictures of celebrities. Just keep smiling, you might as well. She says, Here, help me lift it, big guy (& not a cloud in the sky). And since then I got better, so you never know, do you? The world of circumstances, with you and whosey-whats, is expanding uniformly. I read it in a magazine (proximity mostly). Mostly, with a one and a two and a one becoming something else (two tables over), or something being regarded as something else, whichever (Jenny & Rosie, presently, where the news is breaking). And you go on, Jojo, though the future is over, or at least in serious trouble, the lunatic conditions of a calculable world on their way out into the open with coffee and those little cookies you're so fond of.

A GUIDEBOOK TO PLAYING DOCTOR

We got ready for work and we had opinions about our burning down love. But we've been through that a thousand times or more, trying not to look directly into the light. Enough for you, you get to wear the uniform, they said. That was back in the laboratory, remember? And little Jenny Hoyden and her smock? Like the story behind the scene that we have to supply, Dr. Noyes said. And the fact that you can only occupy one space at a time, Dr. Drake added. She found herself on the chair with pencils. She can wear anything, we muttered, which seems to have been typical of the lab milieu. Quite an introduction to the multidimensional world of hospitality and forms in triplicate, in fact, where it's all important information that'll be helping them serve us better. To further aid the student, each chapter begins with light petting and concludes with moments of truth. And the possibility of headaches. We know by that that we're in a region where there's really nothing worth saying. Jenny would argue her point in more narrowly aesthetic terms, where finally it's the body that's in question. Like the importance of pretty girls keeping both arms. For symmetry, as she says. The same with the eyes, as there are lots of things that can fall out of a clear blue sky.

A GUIDEBOOK TO DESSERT

Our supper was an old-fashioned stew that had a delicate aroma. There's a clue in there someplace, I'm sure of it, as she's just sitting there with her napkin on her lap. Underneath, in the steel framework, is the real strength, we're told. Like the rhythm of the hands, the rhythm of the feet, and the rhythm of the hot stuff. And there are, of course, sectarian subdivisions within each, as out back, Adam and Bucky survived many disappointments and postponements. They look back and forth at each other in the dark. There's still no sign here of the burying of any great heap of treasure, outside of the big X on the lawn, they say. It seems a rather tragic story to the rest of us. So we just sat there watching the leaves turn red. The story's undergone some changes in the retelling though, as Adam and Bucky were well on their way to fulfilling their New Year's Eve resolutions with Danielle and Haley. Other interesting findings include magazines and church picnics, though no age can be completely certain of its charms. We had things to say but none of us said them. And after months of training and countless simulations. As well the trail begins and ends in designated wilderness. We come in peace for all mankind, though we're still a bit disoriented. And the flag stands as a testament to our insatiable curiosity to explore the unknown.

A GUIDEBOOK TO MERCY PLAYGROUND, WITH FRIENDS

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We live in a valley, like most everyone else. We call it Mill Valley, even after the mill shut down. It's about the satisfaction of a job well done, they said. But the work isn't complete. Maybe your dance was too small, for instance. And we could always be more attractive and enticing. Maybe you in your hall, wearing a towel. So we start off in separate directions, and then realizing our error, we turn and start off in separate directions. Just right now we're in training, we mutter. It never will be that simple again, I fear. If it ever was, in the first place. I just want some good news is all, like using one's hands is a natural way to help make oneself understood. And by doing so, you'll appear more French. Especially from the back. I have to admit, it didn't feel to me like it should, though I get this feeling it's here to stay. It should have been more, is all. There in the adventure cabin, as the installation's underway. People come and go. There'll be a slide perhaps, and one of those swings utilizing old tires. And dark glasses, dreaming the clouds away, out on the porch, in love. These are factors in our better times to come. Come back soon, they say. Somebody has to have seen them out there. There? Maybe? Or there? Fluttering the scenery around you?

A GUIDEBOOK TO YOUR PERSONAL FAITH JOURNEY

So happily ever after has them in its grip. And how's one supposed to notice it sneaking up on you anyway, we thought, looking under the couch cushions. Time fared well though, I guess. Later I could eat those words, but that's on our list of Negative Thoughts. Then it's off to discuss matters, where we knew each other better. Admittedly with some difficulty. Even on the comfortable lightweight sleeper furniture. When one thinks one has found a continuing. (We retrospect on that often, with mixed feelings going all through our bodies. & I realistically acknowledge that thoughts are often negative things, with a white-blue glow around us from the refrigerator.) In my new plans, there's plenty of space, I've decided. So who will I have to turn to then? It's just something to add to our list of guesses, like most things, as we stand there looking out over the lawns below, where everyone suddenly wants mercy. These are just the preliminary sketches. We'll do the polishing up later, perhaps. Among the trees, keeping very still. Thank you, we'll say, thank you very much, revolving in the math that moves the sun and the other stars.

A GUIDEBOOK TO BABY PLANS

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We could see for ourselves in those days the movements of our feet, the hesitations and skippings, the very dynamics of us getting someplace. You know how things fall apart. And Rosie agrees, hovering over her meringue. We all just need to relax or something. Take for example Adam and Rosie's cake, which suggests the flaking away of layers and the emergence of new ones underneath. Everything's all about what it isn't, then. A slower, richer lifestyle, even. And this suggested to Carol the erosive power of nature, and, by extension, her need to buy eggs and to have the house decorated. And then to invite us all over. We came a long way expressly to do something. The gaudy reds. The thin strips of yellow. How clever, one could even be led to think of the wind blowing vigorously about. As on that day when there was no longer a clear differentiation made between Bob and the coffee shop, remember? Such as it is, except that we all overstate everything. And go far a field while pinning the donkey's tail. We could see for ourselves in those days the little stories about a gaggle of girls and a bustle of boys, as we blew out the candles. We didn't seem to be saying much, if anything, to each other. But we knew we were always mutually attracted, and thinking of future opportunities to contribute to the common good. Where it comes down to a question of faith, finally, all these limited engagements, all these sunsets filled with birds.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE AIRPORT

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The plane's leaving now, I think, and the rest of us in much the same boat. We'll be together and one of us'll be leaving. They went thataway, someone'll be saying. Into that quite particular blue. Late October. 66°. No clouds. Let's try and recapture the mood, Jenny says. Not much does though. So there we were with six billion people in an empty field. It was a close call, but thankfully we don't expect much from ourselves. As I'm sure you can guess, we counted to ten and opened our eyes, and we've been looking ever since. Tricky devils. We're great believers in efficiency here, as well as cheery songs on the radio. It's our last ditch defense, as the saying goes. Kinda like the one between the present and the future. Or between any two given people, which seems to end matters at the airport. Planes back and forth all day, 65°. This morning it rained. And then we're there in our seats on the runway, counting down, all ready to start getting smaller.

A GUIDEBOOK TO PLAYING DEAD

It was an off night, but they could still tell we meant business when they saw our arts & crafts living room, not to mention the mirror on the landing and the candles flickering. Just ask the help, that's what we have them for. Lambent, as Jhané says, and behind us the conservatory extolling our wallpaper. I'm here to tell you. We should live in a parade, as we sure loved the cheers and applause. Vertiginous optical effects for either the study or rehearsal room, not to mention our prandial concerns. And Carol's orange marmalade cake certainly didn't hurt any, as small women were carrying big blocks from room to room, constructing race. I used to like to do that myself, Martin said, you just start at the bottom and squeeze as you go up. And then there's the usual paperwork to do. So I just don't think it could ever work out between us. It goes back to a game that a coyote taught to a rabbit. Long into the night, the fire tossing our shadows all around.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE LIVING ROOM

Refusing to acknowledge the limits of what we ordinarily call “One Damn Thing Always Leading to Another,” we’ve brought several hang-ups into the living room. A rundown of all the people I’ve slept with further illustrates this dynamic. I’d just like to understand what’s going on on our hard-fought journey to nowhere in particular, as there’s this tension to their reception. A snack tray would’ve been a fine start. Maybe it could even be a party of some sort. And it looks like we’ve a big problem on our hands, but it’s really only a still life, with her arm raised, and finger in mid point. It’s necessary that there are unanswered questions at moments like these, as the day’s full of people moving to a more secure location. Our latent possibilities and poisonous family secrets, for instance. And two lemons on a porcelain plate. With the window open. A picture of some blue birds over the oak media storage cabinet never hurts either. It’s art, perhaps. Perhaps something else, watching Rosie’s back going out the back door. So call it “Has It Come to This, then, Pentimento?” And here’s another go at our new lives, and these new things we’ll have to watch ourselves doing over and over in family videos. On the count of three. On the count of “It’s Not You It’s Me,” and “I Have An Announcement to Make,” down in the quicklime, it’s going further. It’s being developed.

A GUIDEBOOK TO THE BUCOLICS

Beauté! Identité! Obscurité! they shouted, clamoring down the path. Now everything's different, in a vast park bathed in blue light. It's the philosophy of the bit of cloud at the end of the painting. Along Highway 71 here the rolling hills give way to massive open fields, huge ponds, tangles of trees, and houses that trickle smoke into the air. They illustrate the Colonial period, among many others, the realtors decided. We all got along much better after that. Having a light. Not having a light. The results were sometimes puzzling, but always entertaining. Audio's easy as well. Cars and birds. We do our best to honor special requests, she said. I've a stunning face and skimpy wardrobe. Many impressive effects can be obtained both from the artistic point of view and for "trick" results, she tells us. With a great tink they fell upon us. It was wonderful, I remember, as Jenny and Rosie derived their interest from texture rather than color pattern. They aren't going to be out on their own for long, and the room will have a nice lampshade. It's one of my favorite things. You'll find the best friends and lovers here, they say. We laughed about it all over coffee. And we apologized to one another. The total distance of this amazing journey is all the way. I just came to ask you a question. A summer evening. A cold beer. A park bench in Hopperville.

HOPPERVILLE 8: WHAT YOU WERE WEARING

And I hadn't felt this beautiful ever, and you were wearing your new beige suit and had never looked more of all those yummy things. At this point, you can drop items that you were wearing or holding. There are many other possible reasons for why you were not allowed to wear jewelry when you were a kid. The fact is, that suit you were wearing was terribly out of style. We can't believe your white socks were showing under your pants when you sat down. If you were wearing a headset at work you were making minimum wage, and everyone knew it. And everyone knew that if you did not do what the manager told you to do, you might get a red, scaly, crusty rash, like around your finger if you were wearing a ring. I would like to know where the shirt with the eagle you were wearing on Feb.27 is from. If you know this, you may need to ask what you might do if a wall suddenly loomed up when you were two feet away from it. If this was caused or made worse by the fact that you were not wearing a seat belt, the amount of damages you can collect from the other party may be reduced. Point being: I'm wearing a different shirt at the end than during the first part. And you were wearing extremely short shorts which flattered your long, tan legs, and a tiny blue-sleeved baseball shirt that exposed your golden, tan belly. What they were wearing, how old they were, etc., or even if you know who they are. You should bring the clothes you were wearing when you were attacked. Something that you were neither wearing nor holding in your hands. Perhaps you are one of these people. Perhaps I am. In clothes others may see as seductive.

A GUIDEBOOK TO RIDING THE RUBICON

Let's say Bob and Carol have experiences in Bora Bora. They do things there. It sometimes feels quite natural even, as he's trotting out the projector. It doesn't sound like a very promising situation though, does it? On the other hand, we don't have much else to do, and I can see she's smiling hopefully. The same can be said of our foolhardy journey to Disneyland, pressed as we were for time. That's one of the early notions. And then her memories of an unlovely girlhood. He counters with those of a stormy marriage and ill-conceived love affairs. It made us all uncomfortable, but we have to check ourselves. And then the struggle to regain a self, illustrated by their trip to Palm Springs. I sense a defeat coming on is all, as we combine for the pain of losing mothers and fathers. And then there's this problem of continual days after. They told us about it over slides of the desert, where she's still looking for something to make her metabolism go faster, and his hankering to be in show business never left. I had no idea when they asked us over. And then they're standing there on the front step. They're waving to you darling, wave back.