

THE  
GREATEST  
WRITER  
ALIVE

DALLAS  
CLAYTON

*THE GREATEST WRITER ALIVE*

Dallas Clayton

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Please enjoy and share with others.

## *FOREWARD*

I started writing as a teenager. Handmade zines with lots of energy and not much worthwhile to say. They were pretty terrible. When I first moved to Los Angeles I would sell them to strangers on the street. This kept me from having a job and allowed me to meet all sorts of people and find all sorts of adventures.

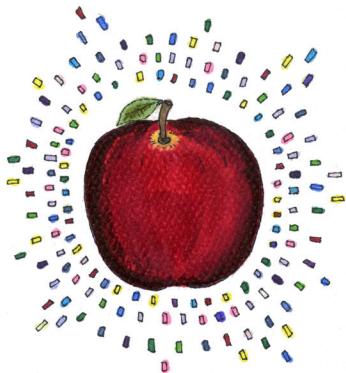
As the writing I did evolved and times changed I started putting things online, which eventually spawned my life as a children's book author. To say that this career path was unforeseen is a vast understatement.

Writing for kids is a magical gift and I wouldn't trade it for the world but as the child-friendly portion of what I do has grown I've simultaneously tried to keep producing work that isn't totally kid-centric - poems, short stories, outpourings of ideas, attempts at understanding how it's all supposed to be. The pieces in this book represent a small sampling of just that: the past few years worth of collected whatnot. A continuation of the spirit of approaching strangers on the street and trying to share a thought or two.

I hope that you enjoy these pieces and that they might make you laugh, or cry, or think, or inspire you in some small way to go out and make foolish decisions of your own that will someday lead you down unforeseen paths toward new friendships and amazing sights.

That would make me truly happy.

Thanks for everything!



### *A SMALL MOMENT IN MY DAY*

At the counter  
inside the gas station  
sits a bowl of apples  
with a hand-written sign  
which reads:  
APPLES.

Beside the apples:  
a bunch of bananas.

They have no sign.

"Did people have trouble  
identifying the apples by sight?"  
I ask as the woman counts my change.

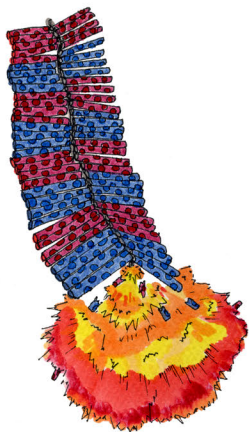
She stops  
then looks over the fruit  
perplexed  
as if I have just asked the most important  
question she has heard in  
six months time.

She stares blankly for a long moment  
then says,

"I don't know.

I usually work on the weekends."





## *COLLEGE*

If the days have come and gone  
when your mattress was on the floor  
with no frame  
and no sheet  
(it was hung over the window)

and you've moved beyond a place  
where people draw  
on the microwave with markers

good luck on your journey  
toward purchasing a horse  
and riding it across the island  
of your choosing.

If those days have not yet arrived,  
take caution.  
They move quickly  
more so than you can predict  
and should be savored while at hand

for soon you will be  
pursuing said horse  
and charting a map for said island  
and those items cost.

Cost big.



## *TORRENT*

I'm sorry that I stole your album.  
It was raining.  
And I was tired.

I don't know if you care.  
You've been dead for so long now  
and those songs were written  
far before computers even worked this way.

I'm not sure where the money goes  
now that you're not here to collect it.  
To your children?  
Or your family?  
Or a record label, mid-dash for the lifeboats?  
Or maybe to someone you never even met.

Whoever it is  
I decided  
I'd rather not give it to them.  
For they didn't pen the words  
that drove me to this crime  
all alone  
tucked into bed  
bleary-eyed  
unable to sleep.

And I am sure  
they all have more than they need  
of what you left behind.

Not that this makes it okay  
to take what I did  
when no one was looking.

It doesn't.  
It is still stealing  
out and out.  
Which we all know is a sin.

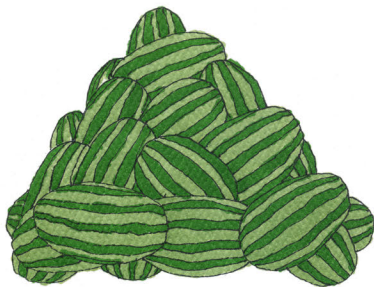
But you never struck me as the type  
who cared much about sinning.

Not the way you sang,  
not the way you carried on  
up there in front of everyone  
letting them all know what really mattered  
even down to your ending.



### *SIMPLE*

When talking to a young child about death  
take comfort in the fact  
that to him  
much of what it means to die  
involves laying down with your eyes closed  
and waiting for someone magical  
to come along and kiss you.



### *DON'T WORRY*

We can plant food  
in the earth  
and it will grow.

It is not a secret.  
It is easier to make  
than clothes or movies.

We don't even need to yell at it.  
You don't even need to freak out  
or stress,  
or whatever you call it  
when your jaw gets all tight  
like I saw it get that one time  
you were mad about your coworker  
who cheated you out of that sales commission.

Yeah, you were so mad then.  
Couldn't stop talking about it.  
Coming up with weird revenge plans  
like a TV caper crook.

Can't even remember that job now.  
Can't even remember what it felt like  
to call someone a coworker.  
But you remember the food we ate.

Juicy watermelons.  
Came up out of the ground  
took no effort at all  
just time,  
like a baby  
or anything else that is truly important.



### *EPIC BALLAD*

A powerful song  
is one  
that makes me remember  
something  
that never actually happened to me.



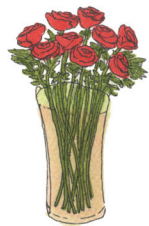
## *MAKING IT*

In Hollywood  
there is a zoo  
that only celebrities get to go to  
and take their children to  
with magic animals  
you can't find anywhere else.  
The children can ride the animals there.  
And all the animals can talk.  
One of the talking animals is a friendly griffin.  
It is named Dulcimer.  
It can juggle.  
Sometimes it juggles knives.

Once Michael Jordan came  
to the celebrity zoo  
and he played Dulcimer the Griffin  
in a game of one-on-one.

Dulcimer won of course.  
Because he can fly.  
And Michael Jordan is 45 years old.  
But it was a real close game.

If you move away from your loving family  
and come to Hollywood  
and get a job playing a  
popular dead outlaw  
who killed innocent people  
in the old west  
the Chamber of Commerce  
might just tell you where this zoo  
is.  
And you can meet a  
real-life werewolf.  
And take a picture with  
it.  
And send that picture  
to all the people  
in your life  
who ever called you fat.



### *THORNS*

At the freeway off-ramp  
a man offers me roses for five dollars.  
Clipped to his collar  
he has a chili pepper pin  
which lights up and plays music.  
It is three dollars.

It seems we've invented  
a better, cheaper rose.



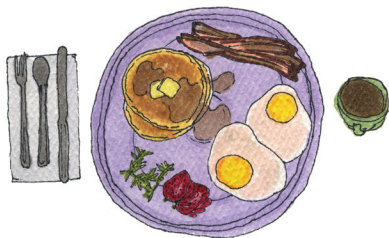
### *TECHNIQUE*

A friend told me  
that a powerful exercise  
is counting the steps as you walk  
(on a long journey)  
and inhaling every twelve steps  
then exhaling every twelve steps.

You are supposed to repeat this  
cycle twenty-four times  
and then (he says)  
things will become very clear.

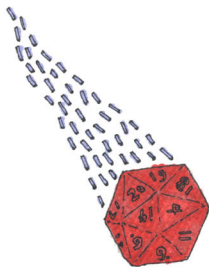
I have tried this two days in a row  
but have lost count each time  
and started thinking about things like  
“where can I get a good sandwich”  
and “how come that guy is pounding  
on the side of that bus.”





### *LATELY*

More important  
than breakfast  
is waking up next to someone  
and having them gently touch your face  
without you even asking.



## *POINTS*

Did you win the Superbowl yesterday?

If so  
congratulations!

If not  
let's work on that.  
You've got an entire year.

Unless of course  
you are not eligible  
because of your age,  
size,  
determination,  
or the fact that you don't play or like football.

If that's the case,  
let's find you something else to win.

There are plenty of things:

Games  
Awards  
Lotteries  
Hearts  
Life

Just pick something,  
whatever it is,  
and hurry up and give it a go.

So this time next year  
the rest of us can cheer you on  
and possibly dump beverages on you  
because we are so happy  
that we can't control ourselves  
and this is the only thing that makes sense to do  
to celebrate.



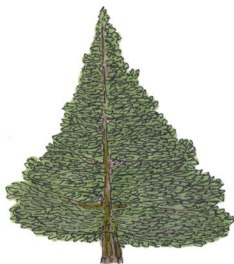
### *ARCHITECT*

Unfortunately  
for most  
who don't regularly practice religion  
the feeling of visiting a church  
is closely related  
to seeing friends marry  
and seeing friends dead.

Thus, to the spectator,  
the place becomes  
a selective devourer  
teetering back and forth  
from innocuous  
cobblestone building  
to gobbler wonderhouse.

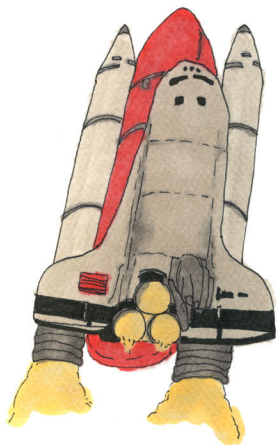
A corner shop  
whose insides forever change you  
from what you were when you entered  
to something completely different when you left.

Like going to the mall  
in the middle of winter  
to watch a baby delivered in the coin fountain  
then five years later  
back to the mall  
to see it drowned.



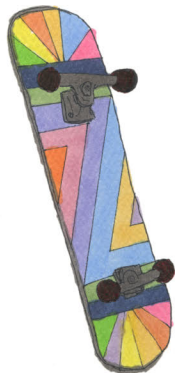
## *EXPLORATIONS*

There's a girl in the woods  
(she lives there).  
She plays banjo.  
She learned it from her dad.  
He was in the army, and has a criminal past.  
He tells stories about killing people because he had to.  
You'll never get to meet him but she has pictures.  
You don't even have to ask. She'll just show you.  
She'll offer you a seat and make you a glass of tea  
in flavors you never knew about with twigs and clovers  
mixed up in the kettle.  
You'll think about how comfortable her sofa is  
(moss cushions and the grass stuffing).  
You'll watch her face  
to see if there's anything wrong with it  
and you'll find there isn't  
and that will make you wonder if you can trust her.  
You'll start to ask,  
but she'll keep talking  
like you aren't even there.  
She talks like she's putting on a show  
for the animals and the trees.  
This makes you happy.  
Because she truly believes they are  
more important than you  
(and they probably are).  
Yes, you could watch  
that girl go on all night  
and you'd still be happy.  
You'd do it if  
you could only find her  
so far out in the woods.



### *AIM HIGHER*

Isn't it odd  
how many times  
you have thought  
"I should go to Paris"  
and how few times you have thought  
"I should go to the moon."



## ENDLESS

You should learn to skateboard.  
It is cheap and fun.  
It is something you can do when you are alone  
or with friends.  
Once you learn, you can hang out late  
at night in parking lots  
for hours and hours  
(and you don't even have to be high).  
Also you can talk to others about skateboarding  
and it will make them think you are cool  
and they will give you things  
like free stickers, or invitations to parties  
with lots of guys at them.

If you get good  
you can jump over all sorts of things  
like cars, and European streets, and statues,  
and off small buildings.  
And people will take pictures of you  
which is nice (for later, to show your kids).

If you get really good,  
maybe someone will pay you  
to take pictures, and make videos of you  
jumping off all sorts of crap  
and they will put you on billboards  
and benches where homeless people sleep  
and your name will be on thousands of pairs of shoes.  
Maybe you will have a video game with you in it  
or a TV show where you shoot your friends with weapons.

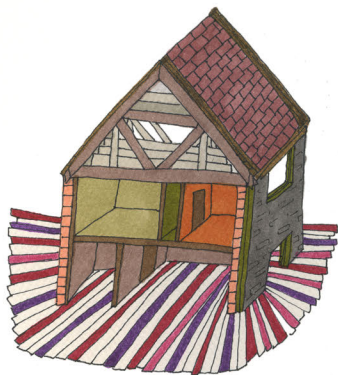
Or maybe not.

Maybe you will just keep doing it  
and no one will really care how good you are  
and you will just use your skateboard to ride  
down the street to buy some beer  
when your "old lady" takes off with the car.

It's up to you I guess.  
Like anything else.

But you should definitely learn.  
It will be worth it  
in the long run.

I promise.



### *PATERNAL*

Did you know  
that sometimes  
late at night  
your father lays on the floor  
in the kitchen  
in his robe  
and tries to remember  
which corner of the house  
has held the greatest number of happy memories?

Once he has figured it out,  
he goes to the other corners  
one at a time  
stands there  
and thinks of you.



## *SERVICE*

You should leave your house today  
with an empty garbage bag  
and some walking shoes  
and start off toward nowhere at all.

On the way you should pick up  
every piece of trash you find  
that hasn't already been claimed  
by a smaller animal  
and stuff it into your bag.

You should see how far you make it  
before your bag is full,  
and once it is  
you should turn around and walk back.

On the way back  
you should think about your neighbors  
and how they aren't bad people  
and don't consider themselves filthy,  
but how they managed to waste so much  
and leave it all out here  
for you to carry home.

When you get home  
you should put the bag on your kitchen counter  
and draw a face on it with a magic marker  
and give it a name  
and take a picture of it  
and make it some tea.

While you drink the tea  
you should talk to it,  
and tell it a secret that you've never told anyone before.  
After you're done you should stuff it into a trash can  
and gently close the lid  
and put it out on the curb for collection.

After that, you should go lay down  
and close your eyes  
and think about yourself  
and how you aren't a bad person  
and don't consider yourself filthy  
and how nice it is to go for a walk  
and clear your head  
on a beautiful day like today.





### *ADDING/SUBTRACTING*

There are some emotions  
that don't have words.  
And others that don't even have sounds.

Like when the mother of a murderer  
and the mother of the person murdered  
sit across from each other  
in a crowded courtroom  
and wonder how.



### *AN AUDIENCE*

There was a tiny guitar  
hung in the storefront window  
of an equally tiny pawn shop.  
It wrote so many songs  
without help from you  
or your dexterous fingers.

It sang the songs  
in warbling belts  
to all the chotchkies  
and sun-crisped copies of Life Magazine.

It was once a gift  
from someone who loved  
to someone who needed not.

But that was long ago.

It had come here by way of pick-up truck.  
And had been set on display  
by a clumsy man  
who undervalued its worth.

As the months passed  
into years  
the guitar grew certain  
not wholly, but as close as one might come  
that it would be here forever.

And so it wrote.  
And so it sang.

Alone.



## *JOY*

Do you ever think  
of how few people there are  
in your life  
that excite you enough  
to want to erect a giant cross  
in honor of them  
on the side of a strange hilltop  
for long distance truck drivers to look at  
as they travel along the freeway?



### *THE GREATEST WRITER ALIVE*

Enough with this "greatest."  
Enough with this "best."  
Enough with this "ranked number one" in an event  
that is not a competition.

Enough with making everyone feel  
like they should be trying to defeat all comers,  
piling up the bodies of poets and thinkers,  
beating the hell out of beauty,  
trouncing new and inspiring ideas,  
setting them all up and knocking them all down  
at a game  
with no goal  
that we are not even actually playing.



## *BUNNY*

If you ever get to visit the Playboy mansion  
for a private party with high expectations  
and you throw your lucky gold dollar  
in the wishing well  
on the sunken lawn  
you might watch it drop to the bottom  
and mingle  
with the rest of the change  
and debate  
for just a second  
in your head  
about whether or not  
to wish for the health and happiness of all your friends  
and family  
or for a wild orgy  
in the grotto  
after hours  
with six or seven girls you don't know.

Later that night  
as you leave the mansion  
wet from swimming in the grotto by yourself  
and alone from the orgy that never happened  
you will be happy (in spirit at least)  
that you chose the wishing high road  
and you will sleep better knowing  
that your friends and family owe you one.



### *GROWN*

It's a dismal day  
that day  
when your parents decide  
because of books they've read  
and teacher's they've talked to  
that you are too old  
to keep taking baths with your friends.

No more bubbles  
splashing  
playing pretend submarines.  
Only washing yourself clean.

It's a hopeful day  
the day that follows  
as you set out looking  
to make new friends  
the kind who will not care  
what their parents think  
and many years later  
will wander with you  
arm in arm  
in search of larger bathtubs  
and neverending bubbles.



### *REVISED YOUR "TO DO" LIST*

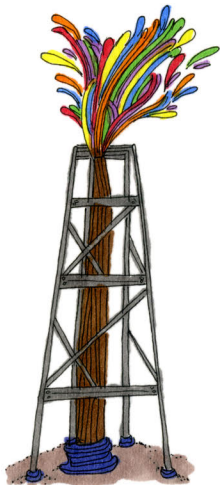
Be a famous musician.

Be a famous actor.

Be a famous writer.

Be a famous basketball player.

Be famous.



### *ON LIVING IN LOS ANGELES*

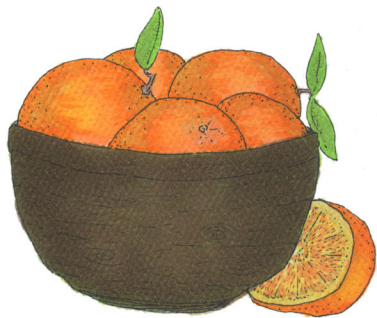
To spend your days well

choose your city

based on its industry

- Steel
- Coal
- Tobacco
- Oil
- Make Believe





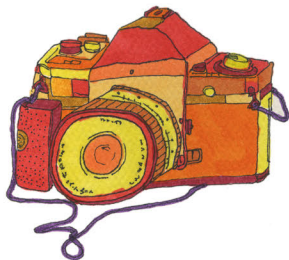
### *GOOD / BAD*

How a bad idea starts:

"That looks easy...I could do that."

How a good idea starts:

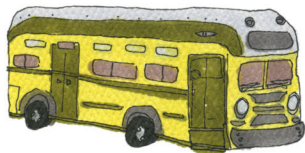
"That looks fun...I should do that."



### *FOOTSTEPS*

Though you don't want to believe it  
your father probably has pictures of himself  
having sex with your mother  
when they were your age.

And even though he is grown  
and no one has come snooping  
in many years  
he still keeps them hidden  
on a shelf  
in a box  
that no one would ever think to look inside.



### *PUBLIC*

The most attractive girl  
on the city bus  
is special  
because she gives hope  
to all the others  
packed tightly in the back  
whose lives have gone south  
while gripping the leather hand-straps.

They stare at her  
like an exhibit,  
like some beauty queen  
from a small town  
where the roads have not yet been paved.



## *ATLANTIC*

"Well, you've gone and done it,  
bought up the last of the oceans.  
How does it feel?"

"Not as good as I thought.  
I really enjoyed the part leading up to it."

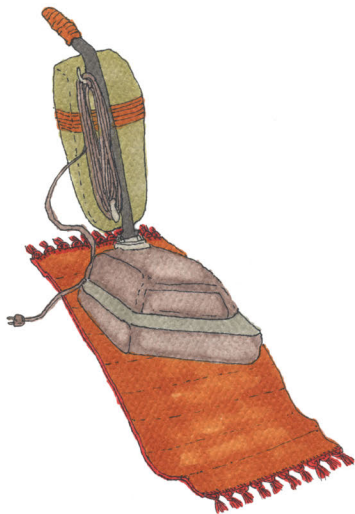
"The chase?"

"Yes, that part was nice,  
but now that I have them all... ehh...  
A man can only sail so many boats."

"Surely. So, what are you going to name it?"

"Megadynamics Industries Ocean West."

"Not bad."



## *SPACES*

If your house  
got into a fight  
with all the other houses on the block  
would it win?

Does it have the character?  
Does it have the heart?

When we are all asleep  
and the buildings get together  
and share stories  
about us living inside them,  
does your house use a funny voice  
to mimic the way you talk to your dog?

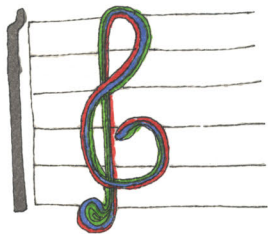
Does your house ever worry  
that you are going to leave it  
for some bigger better place  
closer to the ocean  
with a kitchen you can eat in  
and floors that look old but aren't?  
Would you tell it you were going  
or just up and disappear one day?

Pay some men  
to gut it  
and stow its innards in a truck  
leave its closets full of dry cleaning hangers  
and pennies you couldn't vacuum out of the  
carpet corners.



### *SPIRIT ANIMALS*

There's a very unique feeling that happens in your stomach when you clean out your car and decide to throw away a dreamcatcher.



### *IMPACT*

Sometimes people love music so much  
they burn churches  
buy guns  
and shoot down strangers.

Other times people love music so much  
they sing.



### *OWNER'S MANUAL*

At the bottom of the pile,  
buried, and missing a cover  
there is a book.

It isn't a popular book  
and the author's name  
you'd never know.

But it is truly a work of art  
written just for you.

Inside, somewhere near the middle pages,  
there is a sentence  
that best describes your life  
and answers all the questions you've ever had.

Pure poetry.

It's remarkable.

You'd agree.

Sadly,  
you'll never read it  
because it is getting late  
and you have work in the morning  
and you are already thinking about  
how to beat traffic.





### *BEST*

Just before bed  
I kiss my son  
and ask him what he thinks he will dream about.  
He responds:  
"About a forest, with a big pond, and rainbow,  
and there are unicorns there under the rainbow  
and they are playing tag with me,  
and my dad is there too."

I consider this a victory for the forces of good.



### *HOW TO MEET THE GIRL OF YOUR DREAMS (FOOLPROOF)*

Buy a falconer's glove.  
Approach the girl you like wearing the falconer's glove.  
Ask her, "Excuse me, have you seen a falcon fly by here?"  
Look up to the sky, hopeful/sad.  
If she says, "No," look distraught and ask her  
if she wouldn't mind helping you look for your falcon.

No human being would ever turn down an opportunity like this.

Use the time you spend together searching for the falcon to get to know her.  
At the end of your search (10 minutes)  
you will probably need consoling re: the loss of your one true friend.  
By this point her interest in you based on the fact  
that you were able to put so much love  
and time into the raising of a falcon  
will more than ensure a second date,  
and from there it's just a hop, skip, and a jump to marriage.

Good luck!

\*NOTE: If by chance a falcon does appear out of nowhere,  
simply say,  
"(falcon's name) I've missed you so much!  
Don't ever scare me like that again!"  
Then offer to take the girl to dinner  
for helping you find your lost falcon.

Bonus: You just got a free falcon!



### *HEADSHOT*

Every evening  
he buys his smokes  
and looks up at the wall  
behind the counter  
hoping it's gone.

Every evening  
it stares back at him,  
the ghost of his faded attempt  
8 x 10  
black and white  
bleached and curled by time  
dead center  
bookended by a sad comedian with a pony tail  
and a professional weight lifter  
who signs his autograph with a smiley face.



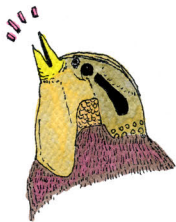
## *BIGGER*

The next time you get to standing on your chair  
at the head of the room  
face changing shades  
voice giving out  
all ready to punch  
and be punched

think about all the rotten hairstyles you've had  
all the favorite shirts you've kept in rotation  
well past their prime  
all the relationships you wish you'd never  
even attempted  
and try to remind yourself  
how nice it feels  
to have your mind changed  
from time to time.

It's a real first-class luxury  
being human  
making mistakes  
realizing it isn't always about you  
and your convictions.

What a perk  
to be able to admit you were wrong  
when you really were  
to have someone say,  
"That's okay, we're all wrong sometimes,"  
and to climb down from your chair  
gather yourself  
and keep on dancing.



### *CHANCE*

Two people  
man and woman  
walking down the street  
looking like birds in the face  
crazy birds, beak noses  
and pointed triangle heads,  
loud colored kinks of wire bird hair  
with long skinny arms  
that hang almost to the knees.  
They hold hands  
and talk low, sharing a secret  
that makes the woman smile, little peg teeth.  
And so the man smiles too, little peg teeth.  
Both bright red cheeks.

And like that, I am happy  
these or any two  
can ever find each other  
in this titanic haystack.



### *ADVICE*

To those involved in the music industry:

No matter how perfect or popular your song is  
more people will still prefer drinking beer  
to listening to your band.

So if it is your goal  
to sell something  
to all the people in the entire world  
to make them happy  
and make your parents love you  
it might be wise  
to start a company  
that makes beer.

Then you can just “jam” on the weekends.



### *THE VISION*

At one time  
before the both of us arrived  
and started thinking we knew so much about  
where we would end up  
and how we would manage to get there  
two men stood next to each other  
both tall and strong  
at the edge of a mountain  
and one pointed out over it all  
deciding where the roads  
would go  
and how long they would be.

The other nodded  
and quietly drew the plans  
to give to the men  
who came in teams  
to carve the routes  
on which people such as ourselves  
would travel away from each other  
for years and years to come.

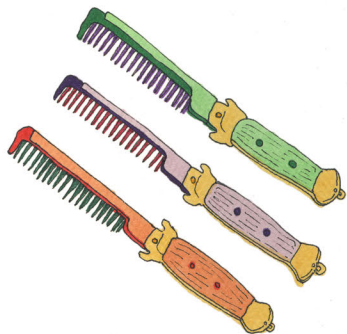


### *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS*

I think it used to mean  
making enough  
every day  
to provide for the people you love,  
and loving enough  
so that those people  
would also provide for you.

It seems like now it means  
making more than you could ever need or use  
and keeping as much of it as possible  
because you don't have time  
every day  
to love anyone enough  
for them to want to share.

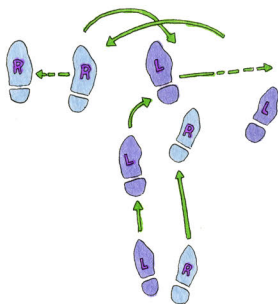




## NOTES

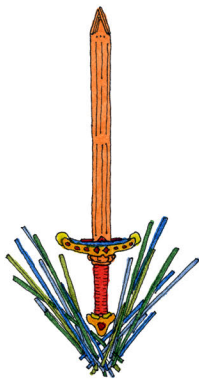
The next time someone  
parks their car  
in a way  
that annoys you so much  
that you feel the need to leave them a note  
telling them about it,  
you should instead  
just write them a note that says:  
"Dear Jeff, now I know where to find you.  
Don't think I forgot about  
what you did to my little girl.  
I'll be watching you..."  
Then draw a picture of a knife at the bottom.

This way, if they are not named Jeff  
they will certainly reconsider parking  
in or around this area  
so as not to be mistaken for Jeff.  
And if they are named Jeff... well,  
victory is yours.



### *CLEARLY*

They give the wrong baby  
to the wrong parents sometimes  
just like they give the wrong diagnosis.  
And the doctor doesn't know  
and the nurses don't know  
and the baby doesn't even know  
and maybe lives his whole life  
thinking he's a Smith  
when really he's a Jones.  
If something so precious and easily contained  
as a newborn baby  
can get handed off and fed down the wrong path  
unraveling an entire life  
and the lives of all of those involved  
how can you expect  
to not misstep  
from time to time  
on your way to achieving something so grand  
and so hard to identify  
as "success."



### *A PATH*

A.

If you do not accomplish the goals  
you had when you were sixteen  
you will be troubled the rest of your life  
and will inevitably replace them with new goals  
that are less fun and involve  
a fear of failure.

B.

The best conversations  
you will ever have  
will happen  
on a front porch  
just before dawn.

You will be wearing your socks  
cut off shorts  
and wondering if you should  
hold out for breakfast.

C.

The two best ways to die  
are laughing  
and in battle.

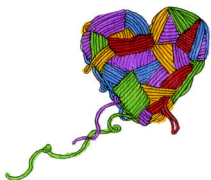


### *WHAT'S WRONG*

Stuck in traffic  
the radio is on  
the newscaster  
in a helicopter high above  
reports of a mattress  
blocking two lanes of the highway.

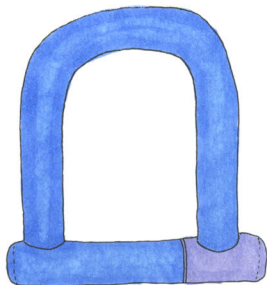
Cars and trucks for a quarter mile.  
So many people  
honking  
listening to the broadcast  
complaining to friends  
blaming the fool who caused this  
damning him  
waiting for a solution.

So few people  
stopping to move the mattress.



### *REPEAT*

Some kid lessons  
are the same as adult lessons  
and hard as ever to learn  
like "Don't try to hurt someone on purpose  
just because they hurt you on accident."



## *FIXED*

I hope all my stolen bicycles  
got ridden fast  
and passed around often  
had their best parts swapped out  
and traded for drugs  
that were used to write good songs  
and have good young fun  
like stealing bigger things  
and crashing them into walls  
and getting arrested on accident  
and getting ratted out by a guy  
who only days earlier  
let you burn him with a cigarette lighter  
because he said you were brothers for life.

I hope they found new homes  
in abandoned warehouses  
and darkened alleys  
and were taken in by older men  
who could no longer hold a license  
were running from something  
weren't supposed to be here at all.

I hope those men took off on them  
as far as they could get  
before their old knees and old hearts gave in  
and stranded them  
some place they'd never been  
and never thought they'd be  
and they met someone there  
at a store  
on a dark road  
who reminded them of a daughter  
they hadn't spoken to in some time  
and they tried to call her  
but the line was dead.

I hope the remains  
were salvaged for scrap  
by industrious someones  
good with their hands  
who saw promise in those old beasts  
and roped them to a roof  
and drove them through the rain  
and into a converted garage  
where they were stripped with gasoline  
and fit with different pieces  
from orphaned others  
and made strangely better  
spray painted a young child's favorite color  
and given as a gifts  
from one person to another  
the first gift they would ever get  
that would teach them the value  
of falling down  
and getting back up again.



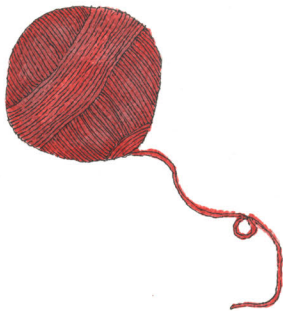
### *YOUNG TROUBLE*

We don't pay much attention to the elderly.  
Even though they probably know more than us  
about what it all truly means.

Even when they've done something stellar  
like helped win a war fifteen presidents ago  
or built the first car  
or outlived their entire families  
with no special diet or exercise routine to speak of.

Even then we don't give them much of our time  
or try keep them around  
close enough so we can listen.

Maybe it's because they talk so slow  
and move so slow  
and we're busy living so fast  
scrambling about and trying to fit it all in  
burning our youth at both ends  
so by the time we get to their age  
we'll have all kinds of fantastic answers  
to all kinds of amazing questions.  
Fantastic answers to amazing questions...  
that no one  
will pay much attention to  
at all.



## *A MISSION*

I wrapped a long red string  
around a pole  
in your front yard.  
It's the pole for your cable television  
I think. Or maybe your phone.  
The one on the left  
when you first walk out the door.

The string is a reminder  
that something important must be done.  
What that something is, I cannot tell you.  
Nor can I say how.  
All I know for sure is that it must happen,  
which is why I put the string there last night  
so you won't forget.

Consider the string  
each morning when you leave  
and evening when you return.

You will soon know what to do.

Once you have done it  
you can take the string down  
with scissors  
or a knife  
then tie it back up  
around a new pole  
in a new yard  
in the middle of the night.

With it  
you can leave this note  
just as it was left for me.

After that  
things should begin to sort themselves  
at a nice steady clip  
from here  
straight on till the end.





Dallas Clayton is the author and illustrator of the “Awesome Book” series. He spends his time traveling the world and reading to kids. He currently lives in Los Angeles and is by no means the greatest writer alive.