

ALL HOPE IS LOST: THE LAST LETTERS OF A CIVILIZATION

by

Mark P. VanMeter

A Thesis Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

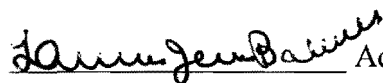
Master of Arts of English

at

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh  
Oshkosh WI 54901-8621

December 2012

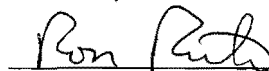
COMMITTEE APPROVAL

 Advisor

12.13.12 Date Approved

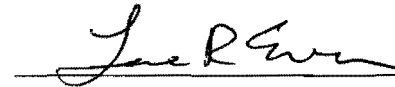
 Member

12/13/12 Date Approved

 Member

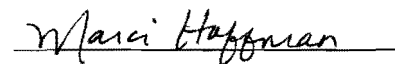
12/13/12 Date Approved

PROVOST  
AND VICE CHANCELLOR



12/14/12  
Date Approved

FORMAT APPROVAL



11/13/12  
Date Approved

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Lewis Mumford, Aldous Huxley, and Neil Postman, without whom none of this would have been possible, for it was their writings that provided me the inspiration to carry out this project. Secondly, I would like to thank all of the professors here at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh who have always provided me with encouragement and challenged me to push myself with my writing. Some of those professors that I would like to name include: Professor Laura Jean Baker, Professor Karl Boehler, Professor Paul Klemp, Professor Christine Roth, and Professor Jordan Landry. I would also like to thank one professor from the University of Wisconsin Manitowoc: Professor Paul Emmett. Paul always encouraged me to pursue my writing and my desires to one day teach English. I wish to thank him at this moment for that encouragement and support. Lastly, I would like to thank my girlfriend, Michelle Grantin, not only for emotional support, but for all the helpful advice that she provided me along the way.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction .....	4
Works Cited .....	21
Polis .....	23
Metropolis/Megalopolis .....	56
Parasitopolis .....	83
Patholopolis .....	103
Necropolis .....	120
Bibliography .....	123

## Introduction

### The Subject and its Importance

Technology and society as a topic has been written about by countless authors and has been the subject of many great science fiction and alternative universe films. And why not? It is one of those subjects that truly gets people to step back, to examine their place in society, and to ask questions about how much control they truly have. Like all the others before me, I was also fascinated by this concept. However, unlike the others I was not so much interested in exploring how this concept affects society, but more in how this concept affects/influences one particular member of a given society. Also, I chose to take a much less Orwellian look at technology and society, instead opting for a more Huxleyan view in which society numbs people with ‘feel-good’ pills and pleasure to the point at which people do not realize what is truly happening to them. On that note, I also decided to focus on one particular aspect of society: popular culture. I wanted something that was current for readers so that they could relate to what the character was going through. My objective for the project as a whole was to get readers to think about who they are and how much identity they truly have when so deeply yet superficially connected to mass media. More to the point, since this world is one to which readers of today can readily relate, I wanted to also send a message to the readers that the world and character that I have created might be real. What I mean by this is that, perhaps readers will realize that they are perhaps giving themselves and society far too much credit, thinking that what transpires will never actually happen. In fact, my main argument is that readers need to pay attention, because a majority of what transpires has already

happened, especially when it comes to the loss of education, popular culture's stranglehold on identity, and the decline of language.

### The Authors

Before I could even begin to write this story, I needed to conduct extensive research. I started out knowing that I wanted to utilize the works of Aldous Huxley, but I felt that his works alone simply would not provide me with enough substance in order to truly craft a great narrative arc. I also did not want my project to simply read as an homage to Huxley's *Brave New World*. In the end I decided to utilize the works of two other writers: Lewis Mumford and Neil Postman. There were two reasons that, out of all the other possibilities, I chose these two writers to supplement Huxley. The first and primary reason was that they simply just had some of the most fascinating ideas regarding technology and society. Postman's views on how technology affected education proved to be quite invaluable, and in fact helped to create a character within the story. And Lewis Mumford's ideas about the inevitable decay of cities due to the rampant increase of technology wound up helping to create the framework of the story. The second reason I chose these two authors was they both tended to more or less agree with the end result of what would happen if technology continued to influence society in some way, shape, or form. This fascinated me because of the extreme gap, not only in time but in discipline, between these men's careers. Neil Postman was a media critic who primarily wrote during the 80's and the 90's, whereas Lewis Mumford was a historian/philosopher of technology who wrote primarily after WWII, and whose greatest works were written and published in the 50's, 60's, and 70's. Moreover, there is no

indication that Neil Postman ever read Lewis Mumford's works. This is what sold these two authors for me: the fact that, despite this time gap and their respective disciplines, when it came to technology and society, they came to the same conclusions. It was simply too good of a serendipitous moment to pass up.

### Huxley's ideas

Choosing the authors was of course just the tip of the iceberg. I now needed to decide what themes and ideas I wanted to take from each. I began first with Aldous Huxley. And it should not come as any surprise after re-reading *Brave New World*, that one of the themes I borrowed was the notion of a 'feel-good' society. When discussing his disgust at how a scientist stated that eventually technology would be so refined it would be able to create micro-cinematographs that people could just slip on and be enjoyed anytime they were bored, Huxley replied, "Science will also, no doubt, be able very soon to supply us with micro-pocket flasks and micro-hypodermic syringes, micro-alcohol, micro-cigarettes and micro-cocaine. Long live Science!" (*Ends* 246). Instead of trying to improve education and bring traditional values and humanity back into society all anybody seemed to care about or value anymore was merely being entertained: a notion that obviously he loathed with every fiber of his being. This was a theme I knew I wanted to incorporate into the story. As such, this is one of the themes that is literally thrust into the reader's face; such did I feel was its importance. A great example of this is when Daniel is introduced to 'drink-away', which is a hang-over pill of my own invention. Daniel describes the experience as, "tasting terrible, like swallowing dirt, but man did they work quick! I went from being drunk to sober in minutes."

The second idea I decided to borrow was his take on how current society was literally losing its ability to talk in a meaningful way. Because of this ‘feel-good’ society in which nobody has to think, there no longer is any reason to engage in meaningful conversation or to even engage in intelligent conversation for that matter; all that matters is that people say things that are funny, shocking, or bold. Because of this, he argued that instead of thinking before opening one’s mouth that people simply spouted off whatever was on their mind. In other words, people no longer placed restraints on what they said, a condition that Huxley stated was, “morally evil and spiritually dangerous” (*Perennial* 216). Because society had removed restraints and placed all of their emphasis on enjoyment, all speech fell into three categories: “1. Malicious and uncharitable towards our neighbors. 2. Words inspired by greed, sensuality, and self-love. 3. Words inspired by pure imbecility and uttered without rhyme or reason, but merely for the sake of making a distracting noise” (*Perennial* 217). And although he never explicitly stated this, one reading of *Brave New World* will tell anyone that Huxley firmly believed that the majority of language fell into the third category. I found this idea to be not only interesting but something I could work with. I decided to implement this idea, slowly at first, but then exponentially increase the frequency in order to drive home its point and its importance. Early on, Daniel talks of family and school, “And I would love to tell you more man, but I have to get back to studying. Oh, and my father asked if I could come and visit next weekend.” Much later on, Daniel is no longer concerned about either of these things, choosing instead to ramble on about something that he saw on the internet, “It is this fat kid who literally rides his bike

straight into a wall...the kid does mention he broke his jaw, but I was laughing so hard I did not care.”

The last idea I wanted to utilize was something that had nothing to do with technology but dealt specifically with societal policies regarding drinking, a policy that Huxley deemed led to something called ‘booze-snobbery’. Essentially what Huxley argued was that society, “Made it okay, even socially permissible for well-brought up young men and women of all ages, from 15-70 to be seen drunk, if not in public, at least in the very much tempered privacy of a party” (*Music* 199). Society is making it okay for people to cut-loose and act a fool and face no repercussions, because they were simply enjoying themselves at a party or some other various social function. Huxley argued that this way of thinking was beginning to poison the minds of people, especially the younger generation, because they would begin seeing parties and social functions as a haven to engage in acts that they would not be able to get away with anywhere else. I found this idea not only fascinating but rather relevant, especially with regards to college life. Collegiate society has made it permissible for people to act a fool and get away with certain acts simply because they are ‘in college’. Because of its relevance and the fact that I whole-heartedly agreed with Huxley’s point of view on the matter, I decided that this would need to play a major role in the main character’s life, either directly by him turning into a drunkard or indirectly via watching someone close to him devolve into a drunkard. Ultimately, I decided to have him devolve into a drunkard who uses this snobbery as an excuse for his behavior, which can be seen in the line, “I’ve been told by



some of the nerds that this routine is not healthy. But at the end of the day, they're just jealous, because I am having the time of my life, and still acing my classes."

### Mumford's Ideas

Lewis Mumford was an incredibly brilliant mind and as such provided me with a plethora of ideas to utilize. However, I decided that I wanted to limit my choices to those ideas that could be more subtly deployed within the story. As such, the first idea I decided to borrow was Mumford's concept of the stages of decay. This concept is quite convoluted, but the basic breakdown is that all cities will eventually die and that each city goes through the same stages before this inevitable income. The first stage of decay is what Mumford called **Polis**. Essentially during this stage of a city's life, there is a clear and definite line between urban and rural life. Suburbanites rely on farmers for fresh food and resources and farmers rely on suburbanites for income. It is a nice symbiotic relationship between the two. However, once this line has been crossed and rural begins to blur with urban, a city enters the second stage of decay, **Metropolis/Megalopolis**. Mumford describes this stage as being defined by, "its form of formlessness...a time of quantity over quality...a city whose power is impotence" (*City* 544). Mumford does state that the beginning of the Metropolis can be seen as good because so many things are booming, but in the end it is simply too much; it tries too hard to be all-encompassing, which is what leads to it breaking down into the **Megalopolis**, a time when, "paper, ink and celluloid are more real than flesh and blood" (*City* 547). The next stage is **Parasitopolis**, which rapidly gives way to the second to last stage, **Pathopolis**. Parasitopolis is simply defined as, "a time of parasites" (*City* 230), and Pathopolis, "a

time of diseases” (Mumford 230). During Parasitopolis, the city’s secondary institutions have begun to feed and devour the city as a whole. This is a time of diversions and the official beginning of the end. Pathopolis is when the secondary institutions have sucked all the life out of the city and it simply begins to rot, both literally and figuratively. Finally, in the end, there is the **Necropolis**. As the name suggests, during this time, the city is officially dead. What I wanted to do with this grim concept was to internalize it and relate each stage to the character. In this project it was important to speed the stages of decay up to a breakneck rate, because the natural rate that the stages of decay normally take simply would not have been feasible with this story’s time line. By doing this, the readers get to see the rapid decay of the character’s mind and identity as the story progresses. It would be impossible to pinpoint exact lines in the story, but the general progression of Daniel’s decay can be seen as such: **Polis**, Daniel is an astute and educated young man who values education and family above all else. **Metropolis/Megalopolis**, Daniel has to endure commercials, is forced to begin learning how to use technology, and is indirectly exposed and affected by popular drinking culture. **Parasitopolis**, Daniel has begun to start using technology to be lazy and is beginning to directly involve himself in popular drinking culture. **Pathopolis**, Daniel has completely immersed himself in popular drinking culture, and no longer cares about education or family. **Necropolis**, Daniel is so immersed, that he can no longer communicate and finish the story in his current state.

The second idea was directly related to the stages of decay. It dealt specifically with how during Pathopolis, the city in a last- ditch effort to survive, will revert to

barbarism, be it directly through gladiatorial combat, like the Romans of old, or indirectly by viewing barbaric acts, possibly as a form of entertainment. According to Mumford, the reason for this is because “by increasing our own capacity for annihilation we have, paradoxically, lessened our sense of horror” (*Human* 243). This idea of the increase in violence struck a particular chord with me, seeing as I view society’s obsession with things like UFC and even football, to a degree, as being slightly unnerving: crowds will erupt when somebody begins bleeding in a UFC fight and fans cheer when a player lands an incredibly huge hit. In many ways, it does seem like we are slowly reverting back to the days of the gladiators. Because of this, I thought that it would be interesting to incorporate this idea into the story, especially near the end when the main character has all-but lost his identity and exists solely through these kinds of distractions: viewing others suffer online. I knew that I did not want the main character to be physically violent, but the thought of a violent and callous mind intrigued me greatly. I especially wanted to have the main character, through this increase in violent and callous attitude, forget his own humanity, which according to Mumford, was the one thing that we must never do, because “If we do not put humanity, in every sense of the word, before all petty and limited ends, nothing can be saved” (*Human* 257). There are three instances of this concept in the story, but the best example is when Daniel is watching ‘Beggar Brawls’—a fictional show that revolves around teenagers exploiting the homeless to brutally fight each other for food. When talking about the brutality and how awesome the show is, Daniel states, “Hell, there is even one video, that unfortunately had to be taken down, that had one beggar impaling another beggar with a broken pipe.”

The last idea that I wanted to incorporate from Lewis Mumford was his notion about the invention of the clock. Mumford's argument was that the concept of time is something that almost everybody takes for granted and just accepts without ever once stopping to question why do they follow a particular schedule. According to Mumford, "Nature no longer controlled time-keeping...time keeping passed into time-serving and time-accounting and time-rationing. As this took place, eternity ceased gradually to serve as the measure and focus of human actions" (*Technics* 14). People no longer lived their lives according to the events that took place but instead became slaves to seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, etc. In our current society, it is certainly difficult to argue this point. After all, why do people have to be at work at some arbitrary time? Mumford had an answer to why people in charge felt the clock was necessary: even though it went against the natural order, "it did establish order and routine" (*Technics* 15). This was such an obscure idea that I did not originally know if I could use it, however after some careful thought I decided I could implement it in the form of non-traditional time. I wanted there to be some event, be it class, or a party around which the main character began to form his life. I knew the greatest challenge would be to subtly implement this concept, because I wanted to achieve the same effect that time itself, according to Mumford, achieved when the clock was invented. I believe I accomplished this end. My choice was to have a third party signal that it was time to do something without actually saying anything, which can be seen by the line, "Well, I got to go man. James is tapping at his watch, so I should get ready for Greg's party."

### Postman's Ideas

Neil Postman's writings mainly focus on two concepts: technology dumbing down society, and technology wrecking education. The medium of technology that Postman disliked the most was the television. I stress television was the medium he disliked the most for a reason: Postman was not a technophobe. In fact, Postman even stated, "T.V. in and of itself is fine. It is only when the "junk" becomes something that is taken seriously or valued that problems occur" (*Amusing* 16). Essentially his basic argument against technology, specifically television, was that people and society were slowly buying into pseudo-context rather than actual context when it came to almost everything information related, stating that society had slowly become, "an age of knowing of lots of things, not knowing about them...a language of headlines-- sensational, fragmented, impersonal" (*Amusing* 70). He argued that this was affecting education, since everything on television was entertaining and hollow; educators were starting to become more akin to an actor on stage in front of an audience rather than an instructor lecturing in front of students. Since Postman was also an educator himself, in his book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, he laid out possible solutions to combat this effect of education needing to be entertaining or spoon-fed. He listed off the tenets of what makes a great teacher, one of which I ended up deciding to use. The number one tenet of a good teacher, according to Postman, was, "Never give your students the answer, even if you know it" (Postman 194). He argued that questions were meant to get your students to think for themselves, and that answering the question yourself was counterproductive to their learning. He does warn that this practice very well might be

met with hostility because students are used to being spoon-fed and not having to think due to television. What I was able to do with this concept was craft a character that strictly followed this principle and who consequently is demonized by the students. The character is meant to get readers to question the current state of education or at least to look around and realize how much damage has been done to it. This can be seen when Professor Stire responds to a student's attempt to answer his question in class, "That was probably the worst answer I have ever heard in my life. Did you even think before you said that, or did you hope that if you just threw out some bull sh\*\*t, that it would make me happy because you tried?"

Along with the decline of education, Postman, along with Huxley, both agreed that the decline of language would soon follow if things continued. However, whereas Huxley focused more on the type of language that people had begun using, Postman focused more on the new language that became created through advertising. The new kind of language that really stood out for me was Postman's concept of 'word-magic'. According to Postman, 'word-magic' is, "the language of replacing reality. Think of all those fools that truly believe that Listerine will improve their love lives" (*Conscientious Objections* 93). Due to the constant nature of television, people see something so often that they actually begin to buy into the associations. The danger of 'word-magic' is that this buying into associations is predominantly happening on an unconscious level so people do not even realize when they are buying a product that they have been swayed. Today we would call this expert advertising. Postman despised this perversion of language. I decided that, because of the nature of the story, that 'word-magic' would

work beautifully. In fact, it ended up working so well, that it became the second major theme that was thrust directly into the reader's faces. I really wanted people to question how much control they possessed. Once again, this was to emphasize relevance as well as importance. A perfect example of this can be found in Professor Stire's letter, in which he cannot stop himself, despite all of his resolve, from responding to his friend's dire situation with the catchphrase, "you gotta get with it or you will miss it."

The final idea of Postman's that I knew that I had to utilize was his theory about culture and myths. Postman defined culture as, "something that must be learned. It is not something inherent. A child has no culture on their own; their culture is given to them by those around them" (Postman 1). When speaking of myths, Postman defined it as being, "Something so widely accepted that it becomes true without question. Myths are resistant to change, because you cannot change one aspect without altering the entirety of the myth" (Postman 3). Utilizing these two principles in the informative pamphlet, *Myths, Men, and Beer*, Postman argues that because of advertisements and popular culture, beer drinking has become a nationally recognized symbol of manliness. And along with this manliness comes a certain code of manly ethics that one must follow. Anybody who dares stray from this code is kicked out of the all-exclusive manly club, consequently becoming a social pariah, the misfit of the party scene. Seeing as the ads that they studied were mainly targeted towards impressionable young men, Postman and his colleagues argued that this type of advertisement was reckless, because it painted associations between beer and illegal activities that could very well be the cause of young men hurting themselves. The point of the pamphlet was to inform people of the dangers

of this kind of advertising and to aid them in remembering that real life never happens like it does in a commercial. This point really struck home for me. Speaking as somebody who had indeed bought into the myth of beer and masculinity, I thought it would be worthwhile to explore the concept. In the end, this myth became the catalyst for the downfall of the main character. The goal was to once again get readers to stop to reflect on the dangers of buying into what they see on a daily basis, especially those ideas that are intentionally, albeit subliminally, marketed as truth. Near the end of the story, Daniel has completely bought into this myth, “I’m like one of the most popular kids at the university. Greg, James, and I rented out a place off campus, and we’ve been having more fun than ever before. Seriously, we party almost every fucking night. It’s truly awesome man.”

### The Genre

After figuring out what story I wanted to tell I needed to figure out the style or genre that it should be told in. I knew that it needed to be a genre that allowed for some loose interpretations/predictions about the future. It needed to be a genre that allowed me to put forth a message but to do so in a style that was not overtly straightforward. In the end, I decided that this project needed to be done in a postmodern style. I chose the postmodern style predominantly because, “it involves pushing modernist ideas to further and more experimental extremes: rejecting traditional distinctions between genres, and emphasizing irony, playfulness, ambiguity, fragmentation, discursiveness, self-consciousness, satire, and an interest in popular culture” (Nguyen XV). This genre truly embraces the essence of what I was trying to do with the story. It is a story that is



meant to get one to think, but not to provide answers. It is a story that pokes fun and scrutinizes popular culture. And it is a story that plays around with experimentation in an attempt to draw readers further inward, keeping them engaged, making them part of the story itself. For these reasons alone, the postmodern genre was truly the only way for this project to succeed.

### The Style

This was the hardest part when it came to writing the story. How do I tell it? This story was not like any other story; it needed something special. It needed to engage readers in such a way that they became part of the story itself, and it needed to connect with the audience on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. Because of my propensity to focus more on the intellectual side and less so on the emotional side, the two styles that I decided to choose from were diary fiction and epistolary fiction. At first, I thought that diary fiction would be the perfect choice because it is a style that embodies intimacy and closeness. These stories are told from the point of view of one person and they read just like a diary. In essence, the reader is allowed to peek into the character's inner thoughts, those pieces that they hide from the outside world. And through these thoughts, readers are taken through a journey in which they become very close to the character, sympathizing or hating him during the entire story. This seemed like the perfect choice, but there was one major issue with diary fiction: it is meant for the character. What I mean is that diary fiction is told from the point of view of the character and these thoughts are truly meant only for the character's eyes. The story that is being told is not meant for anyone else, there is no listener, no reader. So,

although the journey can be emotional and readers can feel intimacy, ultimately this is all a lie, because the reader was never meant to go on this journey.

Epistolary fiction, on the other hand, is the exact opposite; it is written for the sole purpose of being read by somebody else. And because there is a someone else, the point of view of the story becomes one of a direct second- person, which is exactly what I wanted, because, as Janet Burroway states in her book *Writing Fiction*, “With second person the author assigns you, the reader, specific characteristics and reactions, and thereby--assuming that you go along with their characterization of you--pulls you deeper and more intimately into the story” (Burroway 304). By utilizing the direct second-person point of view, I was able to close the gap between the intellectual part of the story and the emotional part of the story by essentially making readers feel as if the letters were meant for them. This form allowed me to ask readers to feel like they were the intended recipient. This style also fit in very nicely with the structure of going through each stage of internal decay within the main character. Each stage of decay became a series of letters that embodied not only the elements of each particular stage, but some, if not all of the other author’s ideas that I decided to implement into the story. Once again, Epistolary fiction was simply the only option that allowed this project to succeed.

### Creative Problems

I encountered several small problems that proved to be a hindrance in finishing this project, but there were two huge bumps in the road that almost stopped this project from even getting started. The first major bump was characterization, specifically, how

a character's voice sets him apart from the others. This is something that many writers have no issue with, but I struggled a great deal trying to make this work with my project. As stated previously, I am an idea writer, so dialogue is not my strong suit. However, it was important to figure out how to tackle this issue, because as Burroway says, "Like appearance, language choices convey attributes of class, period, ethnicity, and so forth, as well as political or moral attitudes" (Burroway 76). So, in order for this project to work, each character needed to sound different. I realized how much the epistolary form would help. Because the form is one of letter writing, that means that not only does word choice matter, but also the style of how the person writes; after all, no two people write the same way. By incorporating this stylistic choice into the project, I was able to compensate for my lack of variation between what exactly was said by providing the reader a physical representation of each character's identity through the style in which they wrote.

The second major bump I encountered went right along with the first, and it related to bringing the characters to life on the page. Once again, I am an idea writer so physical descriptions and even actions of a character are very difficult for me to convey, to the point of my attempts coming off as either awkward/absurd. Thankfully, thanks to the beauty of fiction writing, I was able to bring my characters to life through their thoughts. Once again, according to Burroway, "In fiction you have the privilege of entering a character's mind, sharing at its source internal conflict, reflection, and the crucial processes of decision and discovery" (Burroway 121). The easy part was letting readers get to know who the characters were through their thoughts and their words.

The hard part was that I had to do so in such a way that it seemed natural and not like the reader was being subjected to some form of case study on each of the characters. After many failed attempts to figure out how best to accomplish this end, I once again relied on Burroway for advice. Her advice on free-writing proved to be exactly the tool I needed to succeed. When one free-writes, he/she is simply, “doing anything to keep going, and that is the only point. When the critic intrudes and tells you that when you’re doing is awful, tell the critic to take a dive, or acknowledge her/him and keep going” (Burroway 5). What I discovered is that when I just wrote without stopping to criticize myself, I actually wound up discovering the best way to make my characters come to life, and I did so with nearly zero physical descriptions, which is a feat that I am quite proud of.

#### What I Hope I Have Accomplished

In the end, what I have tried to do is to present a story that truly gets readers to think. I want them to think about who they are in society, and how much subtle influence society truly does have on them. I want them to think about the effect of technology serving as a vehicle whose sole purpose is to deliver popular culture’s messages to the public at large. I want them to think about the state of education as it stands today. Finally, I want them to truly think about everything that has already been lost, though nobody seems to even remember that it existed in the first place. But this is still a story, so I hope that I have made the journey an enjoyable and engaging one in which readers truly can immerse themselves and become lost for a time.

## Works Cited

- Burroway, Janet, Stuckey-French, Elizabeth, & Stuckey-French, Ned. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, Eighth Edition*. Boston: Longman. 2011. Print.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization*. New York: Greenwood Press. 1969. Print.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Music at Night and Other Essays*. New York: Doubleday Doran & Company, Inc. 1930. Print.
- Huxley, Aldous. *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper & Row. 1945. Print.
- Mumford, Lewis. *Technics and Civilization*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1934. Print.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1961. Print.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The Human Prospect*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd. 1956. Print.
- Nguyen, Minh B & Shreve, Porter. *The Contemporary American Short Story*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc. 2004. Print.
- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Viking Penguin, Ltd. 1985. Print.

Postman, Neil. *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology, and Education*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1988. Print.

Postman, Neil et al. *Myths, Men and Beer: An analysis of beer commercials on broadcast television, 1987*. Falls Church, Va: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. 1987. Print.

Postman, Neil and Weingartner, Charles. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Delacorte Press. 1969. Print.

## Polis

*August 26th, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*Hey, I know it has been quite some time since our last correspondence, and I apologize for that. Let me catch you up to speed. I finally did it man. I finally decided to tell my parents that I not only wanted to go, but that I was going to college.*

*Mother left the room immediately upon hearing this. I did not blame her, after all, there was no need that she be subjected to the inevitable fallout that was to come. To my father's credit, he did take the news somewhat well. He scoffed at the notion, regurgitating the same things I had heard my entire life: "How do you plan to afford that, huh? Because your mom and I sure as hell are not going to pay for it. Besides, what college would take you? Come on Daniel when the hell are you going to finally grow up and realize that you're a damn farmer?" It was at this point that I informed my father that I had already been accepted to the local University. My dad's face turned crimson red, and for a brief moment, I thought he was going to slug me. Instead, he just swallowed his anger and asked how in the world did I apply to the University, because he had not seen any papers or letters in the mail. This was the part that I was dreading the most. I almost*

wished he had just slugged me, that way I would not have to tell him. But life is funny that way, making you do the things you dread doing. So, right there, to his face, looking him straight in the eye, I told him that I had applied online at the library.

To say he was stunned would be an understatement: his eyes glazed over with disbelief and rage, his body tensed up as if a rattle snake were slithering close by. If I did not know any better, I might have believed that I was Medusa and that I had just petrified my own father. You have to understand something, Peter, my father hates technology, especially computers. Says that they are the 'devil's playthings' and that 'they make a man's mind weak'. As such, everybody in the household is forbidden to use one. But I was so desperate to choose my own path in life, that I willingly violated my father's cardinal rule of the household. When he finally regained his composure, he was no longer handling the situation well. I had no choice but to stand there and take his verbal assault. He must have called me a f\*\*\*ing idiot at least forty times before finally stopping to take a breath. I knew that I would regret it, but I decided that this was the precise moment for my rebuttal. I proceeded to tell him that he was the f\*\*\*ing idiot, and that computers were a great tool that simplified a great many tasks, and that if he would pull his head out of his a\*\* and wake the f\*\*\* up, that he would realize that technology is



*not a bad thing. In fact, technology could actually make his life easier, especially with a lot of his farming duties- - that is when I knew I had gone too far.*

*My father booted me out of the house and told me not to come back home till I came to my senses. To his credit, he did give me enough money so that I could eat and rent a room at the local hotel in town. Which brings us to the present. I have been staying at the hotel for a couple of days now, and I have no idea what is going to happen from here. I will be in touch as soon as I figure things out.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*August 31st, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*So, a couple of days after I last wrote to you my father finally contacted me. I asked him what he wanted, to which he only replied, "Come home. We need to talk." Believe me I was in no mood to walk back home only to have my father yell at me some more, but I was also getting quite tired of staying in the stupid hotel. Naturally, I decided that I would be strong enough to take his verbal assailing, and then I would just go upstairs to my room and begin packing: the plan, of course, being to leave early the next morning before my father awoke, thereby avoiding any further unpleasantness. But that is not what went down at all when I finally got home.*

*First off, I knew something was up, because my mom's car was not in the driveway. And seeing as she does not go anywhere, this puzzled me. I walked up the steps, each stair creaking louder and louder so as to further announce my presence to my father, who no doubt was standing cross-armed directly in front of the door, just itching to let me have it. This thought made me hesitate a little, and for a brief moment, I was ten years old again, staring up at the menacing door, awaiting the wrath of my father for disobedience. I know it was silly to think about something like that, after all I am twenty years old now. Mom was away though, and he is still an incredibly large man...the possibility was not out of the question. Regardless though, I was going to go to college, I was going to take control of my life, and there was nothing that my father was going to do that was going to stop me. So, I took a deep breath, preceeded up the last two remaining stairs, gripped the doorknob, and steeled myself for the onslaught.*

*But when I opened the door, my father was not standing in front of it, arms crossed. I hesitantly called out. My father shouted down, "I'm upstairs, Daniel." I assumed that he was in my room: the ol 'I'm talking to you on your turf, so you can let your guard down' routine. This was rather confusing, because my father, as you know, is the antithesis of subtle. But when I opened my door, he was not there. I called out again. He shouted back, "I'm in the attic." The attic? My father had not been in the attic for years. Why on earth did he want*

to talk to me there? Something was seriously wrong. My heart was racing by the time I ascended the last rung of the ladder to reach the attic.

I will not lie to you, man. For a very brief moment, I swore that my dad had sent my mom away and called me up to the attic to kill me. It would be easy enough to explain away my disappearance. We're farmers after all: accidents happen all the time. Fortunately my brain was able to override these irrational thoughts. Remember all the crap that you and I used to put him through? All the police officers he had to talk to? If he was willing to put up with bailing you and I out of jail then my life was probably not in any danger.

I saw my father. He was crouched down near some boxes, holding what appeared to be photographs in his hand. When I approached him, I noticed that he was crying! You and I both know that my father does not cry. I was genuinely concerned. I asked him if he was okay. He simply turned to me and said, "Take a seat, Daniel, there is something that you need to know."

I will be in touch soon with all the details. As always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

*September 2nd, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*I finally find myself with a few moments to myself. So now I can finally tell you what my father had to tell me.*

*He stood up, dragged a box across the floor, and sat down. I followed suit and sat down directly across from him. He wiped the tears from his face, held out his hand and said, "Go on. Take 'em." I reached across and took the photographs from his hand. I told him that I did not understand. He just stared at the floor and said, "Just look at 'em." As I began to look at the photographs, I was flooded with waves of childhood memories. The first one that I looked at had been taken on Christmas morning when I was maybe five or six years old. The next set included several pictures of my father reading to me on the couch when I was an infant. And finally, I was staring at a picture of me at my high school graduation. I looked over and noticed that my father had begun to cry again. I asked him why he was crying, why did he give me these pictures, and most importantly, why was he in the attic? He stood up and walked towards the window on the far side of the room and said, "Do you notice anything about those pictures?" I told him I knew they were pictures from my childhood. He just shook his head solemnly and said, "No. Beyond that. Don't you notice something else about those pictures?" I was growing more confused by the second, seriously convinced that my father had*

suffered some kind of mental breakdown. I sat and stared at the three photographs, but nothing was registering. I told him that I did not see anything special about the pictures. I asked him if he was okay, and if I needed to call and have Mom come home. He walked back from the window, plopped down on his box, snatched the photographs out of my hands, placed them in his hands, fanned them out and said, "Dammit! Look harder! Don't you see something familiar in each of these pictures?" I was about to repeat my earlier answer, but then I noticed it. My father was crying in each of the photographs.

When I confirmed what I saw, I asked him why he was crying. He replied, "Because I knew I was losing you. It was only a matter of time." I wanted to chime in but he continued. "Even when you were just a small child, I tried to get you interested in farming, but you could not have cared less. No, what you wanted was books, stories about fantastical flying monsters, and all that crap. So, I read to you every night, because that is what you wanted. I didn't mind really, you were only a little child, after all. Still, it always made me sad that you never wanted to hear my old farm stories about when I was a little boy. And then, when you turned five, I decided I was really going to treat you. I went out and spent more money than I should have and bought you the deluxe farming and construction toy set. I was so excited for you to open your present that I couldn't sleep. But when you opened your present, you had the saddest and most disappointed look on

*your face. You turned to me and asked me why Santa didn't bring you the books that you had asked for? Finally, on your high school graduation. Standing there with all of your friends, you said, and I quote, "To hell with farming man. I want to be an English teacher." Now I know that later you told me that you were just putting on a show for your friends, but part of me knew that you actually meant what you said. And that really crushed me, Daniel. These damn pictures represent the three most devastating moments in my life. And that is why I buried them up here in the attic, hoping to never have to see them again. But now you are going away to college, and pretty soon there will be a fourth picture to add to this box. Why do you want to do this to me again, Daniel? What is so damn bad about farming?"*

*I really did not know how to respond. This was a side of my father that I had never seen before, a side that I did not know even existed. All I managed to say was that there was nothing wrong with farming, but I did not want to do it for the rest of my life. I tried to assure him that my going away to college had nothing to do with getting away from the farm; it was just something I knew that I needed to do. I promised him that I would visit as often as I could. That is when my father stood up rapidly, grabbed me by the shoulders, lifted me up and screamed, "And what if there is no god d\*\*n farm to f\*\*\*ing come back to?!" My muscles locked. I became stiff, unable to move. All I could manage was to look*

*perplexed by what he had just said. He threw me back down onto my box, walked over to the window, placing both hands on the wall beside it and said, "Look, Daniel, we might be losing the farm. There are just so many repairs that have to be made and...well... I just don't have the budget and resources to make them anymore." My father must have read my mind, because he immediately said, "Go ahead. Ask. Ask why I refuse to have automated help on the farm." This was an opportunity I could not pass up, so I asked.*

*"Do you remember Tim?" I nodded my head. "Well, you know Tim came down with a crippling case of arthritis. He couldn't do any reaping, weed pulling, or harvesting duties anymore. The doctor suggested that he get some automated help for his farm, you know, just till his wrist healed up. Well, Tim was resistant at first, but he didn't want to lose his farm, so he reluctantly agreed. Sure enough, the automated help was great. It did all of the work in half the time and was ten times more efficient. Months later, Tim's wrist healed, and he decided that he didn't need the help anymore. But when Tim went out to reap, he complained about how tired it made him. When he harvested, he complained how he had to make multiple trips to bring in all of the crops. When he pulled weeds, he complained about getting cuts on his hands. It wasn't two days later that Tim brought back the automated help to his farm. When I asked him why he had the help when he was completely healthy, he just said, "Life is just so much easier with*

them." Well, eventually Tim couldn't afford the automated help anymore and when he went out to reap, harvest, and pull weeds, he honestly did not know what to do anymore. That's right. He forgot how to do the things that he had been doing since childhood. I refuse to let that be me, Daniel. I refuse to be useless. That's why I will not allow any of that automated help on my farm."

After taking in this story, I asked my dad if this was the reason that no computers were allowed in the household. He told me this was indeed the case. I also asked him if the reason that he did not want me to go to college was because he feared I would end up like Tim. He once again said this was the case. I stood up and walked over to my father and told him to turn around. I told him that I would never wind up like Tim and neither would he. I told him that automated helpers did not ruin Tim's life, because Tim had always been lazy. Even without the helpers he still would have let his farm go into ruin. I assured my father that he was a strong man, both of mind and body, that he would never be useless. I also reminded him that even though I had used computers, I still preferred to write out my correspondence because it felt more natural that way. I assured my father that I would never forget who I was, unless my father forgot who he was, and seeing as that would never happen, then neither he nor I had anything to worry about.



*He smiled at me and told me, "You're stubborn as a mule. You get that from your mom." I told him, "No, I get that from you." He laughed and slapped me on the shoulder and said, "Alright, well enough of this feeling crap. Let's go downstairs and get you packed, son." On our way to the ladder, I asked him what he was going to do about the farm. He simply responded, "We'll see, Daniel. We'll see."*

*It just goes to show, Peter, that people can always surprise you, especially if they are your family. Well, I've got to go right now Peter. I still have some last minute packing to do and then I leave for college tomorrow morning. As always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*September 3rd, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*Well, I finally finished moving into my dorm room here at the college. It was quite an exciting trip, I must say. But do you know what was really strange? Even though I have been looking forward to this day for some time now, I almost*

never made it here. And this was not due to any car trouble this time, no man, I almost could not bring myself to leave the farm this morning.

My mom must have come back sometime in the late evening, because I awoke to an unusual smell: double chocolate chip pancakes with a side of sizzling bacon.

When I came downstairs I could not help but cry a little. It had been years since my mom had made me my favorite breakfast dish, and it just so happened that this was the same day that I was leaving. It made the moment a little bittersweet.

My father came into the kitchen just as I was sitting down at the table, he gave me a nod and then asked, "Do you have everything packed?". I told him that I did.

He responded with a smile and said, "Well good, cause lord knows I don't want all of your crap in there when I turn it into my private office." As you know my father never has been that good at humor, but I appreciated the effort: I knew now that this day was going to be harder on him most of all. I finished the last bite of my pancakes, and headed back upstairs to my room.

It took me a few trips, but I did eventually manage to load up the car with everything that I was going to need for college. I could have just gotten into the car and driven away, but you know how much of a sucker I am for nostalgia, so I decided to say one final goodbye to the farm. I started off by heading over to the main area where we house our chickens and our cows. Immediately my memories transported me back through time. I found myself being six years old and playing

*with the chickens, my father giving me handfuls of seed to drop on the ground for them. And then later on, my father having to go into town and get a bucket of processed chicken, because I told him that he could not kill the chickens because they were my friends. I remembered my father showing me how to milk the cows, and my many failed attempts that resulted in my father becoming so disappointed and frustrated that he actually had no choice but to laugh at my pathetic attempts. The pain that I felt when all he said was, "I thought you knew better" when I accidentally killed one of our cows because you and I thought it would be exciting to go cow tipping. When I came back to reality, I was standing in front of the barn that housed all of our hay, staring at 'ol Bertha', the ugliest tractor that ever existed. I always found it odd that my father named the tractor with such an ugly name. Perhaps there was something deeper that I never could grasp. Perhaps, in his own way, my father gave it that name to represent the fact that the tractor was tough as nails and did not slow down for anything. She certainly never slowed down for me when I was trying to learn how to drive her did she? Do you remember my father literally throwing his hands up in the air and going back inside the house after I had backed into the barn for the fifth time in a row? Still, deep down, I loved that tractor, and I had a feeling that my father did to. Maybe that is why he named it 'ol Bertha', to secretly say he loved her without being obvious about it.*

*It was at this time that my father came by and saw me staring at 'ol Bertha'. He asked, "Watcha looking at, Daniel?" I told him that I was just saying one final goodbye to the farm. He was about to walk away when I stopped him and told him that I understood about 'ol Bertha'. I said I understood now that it was a way to show that he loved it without being obvious; a way to show that he respected how tough she was. My father almost collapsed from laughing.*

*When I asked him what was so funny, he replied, "Daniel, I named the tractor 'ol Bertha', because she was ugly as f\*\*k, and she is even worse now." I was about to backtrack to say I knew that and was only joking before, in an effort to save my dignity, but I knew that it was pointless. So instead I just let my father laugh at my stupidity for a few more minutes. When he finally stopped, he said, "Look, if you could not see that, then maybe you aren't cracked up to be a farmer after all."*

*I chuckled at his statement and told him I should probably leave then before my dumbness rubbed off on him and the whole farm. We both laughed. It was an awkward laugh though. We both knew I would most likely not be back for a while, and even when I would finally make it back to visit, the farm might be gone. My father decided to break the tension by walking over, giving me a hug, and wishing me good luck at college. I asked if Mom wanted to say goodbye. My father responded that breakfast was her way of saying goodbye. I told him that I understood, got into the car, and left.*

*The entire trip up here all I could think about was the chicken coop, the cows, and 'ol Bertha'. I just hope that they are all there when I go back to visit next year. Well, Peter, I am getting rather tired seeing as it is very early in the morning right now, so I think I will end this letter here. But don't worry; I will have so much more to tell you now that I am in college. Until then, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*September 10th, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*You might not be hearing from me for a while. Time is unfortunately a luxury I never seem to have an ample amount of due to the workload of college classes. So to compensate for what will inevitably be a lengthy passing of time before my next correspondence, I shall try to make this particular letter a little longer.*

*When I arrived at the campus for move-in day, the amount of young people I saw was incredible. I guess that is what happens when a small town farm-boy finds himself smack dab in the middle of the big city. I was ecstatic. I just kept*

*thinking about how amazing my life was going to be now that I had finally taken my future into my own hands. As I arrived at my dormitory, I noticed I was one of only a few students whose parents had decided not to make the trip: whether this was due to travel issues or support issues I did not know, and it did not matter. What did matter was that I already saw potential for new friendships, because we already shared something in common. But that would be something that I could focus on at a later date; at the moment my only concern was unpacking my things and getting settled in to my new home.*

*I could not help but chuckle when I saw people trying to hopelessly move furniture into the rooms. I had never actually been inside, but the few pictures that I saw online during an interactive tour definitely did not look big enough for couches and stuff like that. And as it turned out, I was right. It was even funnier watching them have to haul the furniture back to their vehicles in disappointment. Meanwhile, I only took three trips to move all of my assorted boxes into my room. I did not really care that much about decorating, so I just chose one side of the room, filled the dresser with my boxers and socks, hung up my shirts and jeans, and set the books I had brought with me on the desk. And do you know what was on the desk? A computer. My very own personal computer. I think my father would have fainted had he been there. I never really imagined myself using it all that often, I would much rather read, but it was still a nice touch, and most*

*importantly, reassured me that I was a long way from home. I broke down my boxes, stuffed them into the corner of the closet and then decided to take a walk around the campus.*

*Admittedly, the campus was not anything special. It looked like any stereotypical college campus: large buildings with big bold letters denoting the name of the building, designated areas for the sole purpose of outdoor sports by every dormitory, standard concrete walkways that wound all throughout campus, etcetera. But Peter, I have to tell you...even though the campus was nothing special, the people were. Oh and what amazing people I saw. I will tell you that we never saw anything like this at our small-town schools: people with multiple colored hair, people with piercings in their face, nose, and eyebrows, people wearing designer clothing (you know the really fancy and expensive kind that we only dreamed of owning), people with tattoos. But do you know what surprised me the most? I saw something that we had only heard about: I saw a fat person, Peter. I almost could not believe my eyes, but there he was. It seems silly, but when you grow up around the people that we grew up with, is it really any surprise that the thought of seeing somebody who is lazy and eats too much would make me stop and stare? Unfortunately for me, he did not appreciate my gawking, so he flicked me off and went back inside his building. I finally finished my stroll and made my way back*

into my room. My roommate had finally arrived and was in the process of moving in. I decided to introduce myself.

I discovered his name was Greg, that he liked sports, was on the football team, was a womanizer, and that he only had a couple more semesters to go until he would graduate. He was a very friendly guy who seemed to know everybody on campus as he demonstrated by saying hello and calling every single person who walked by our room, by name. I did not really get a chance to talk to Greg for a lengthy amount of time, because he was heading out to a friend's house for a move-in party. He asked me if I liked to party, to which I told him honestly that I did not, that I was here at the college to learn and have a remarkable experience. His response to this was, "Well that's f\*\*\*ing lame, man. Trust me, a few weeks here and you won't be saying stupid s\*\*t that like anymore. At least for your sake I hope you don't, if you ever hope to get laid." Even though I was not entirely familiar with the terminology that he was using, I got the message. I don't mind telling you, Peter, that I don't much care for Greg, and will most likely be requesting a room transfer sometime in the near future. After all, a bad influence like him could seriously wreck my chances for success here at college.

---

So today I discovered yet another reason to dislike Greg: he likes practical jokes. In this particular case, he thought it would be hilarious to turn off my



alarm clock so that I would wake up late for my classes. Perhaps I might have found this funny if he decided to do it later on in the semester, but not on the first day, the most crucial day of my college career. This is the day when I begin to develop a rapport with my professors, when I begin to start friendships with my fellow classmates, and when I would finally prove to myself that this is where I belonged. And yet, Greg thought it would be amusing if I missed this opportunity: I was not going to give him the satisfaction. I ran across campus, not caring that I was still wearing my pajamas, and arrived just under twenty minutes late to my first class. A great deal of laughter erupted when I came through the door, which did not bode well for me securing a good relationship with my professor. Surprisingly, though, the professor just told me to take a seat and asked the class to quiet back down until he finished his lecture. And what a fascinating lecture it was, all about ancient Greek literature and how many modern novels of our generation could not exist without these Greek tales. After class the professor asked to see me. I knew then that I was in trouble.

But as it turns out, just as I was thinking the worst, the professor simply wanted to let me know what I had missed. He informed me how his class would be different from any other class I would take. He said his goal was to challenge us to the point at which we would want to break, and then he would push us some more. He told me that if I thought I could get away with basic memorization and

regurgitation of dates and times, that I should just drop his class right away, because there was no room for that mentality. He told me to be eager, inquisitive, and ready to actively participate during his class. He informed me that the works we would be reading would be difficult, but in that difficulty is where the reward lay. Finally, he asked me if I had any questions. I told him that he had made everything clear and that I was incredibly sorry I had missed almost half of his class on the first day. He told me that everybody gets one pass in his class, but after that you're done. I told him that it would not happen again. As I was on my way out the door, the professor asked me what caused me to late? I started telling him that my roommate Greg - he must have known who I was talking about, because all he said was, "Oh. Greg. Word of advice for you, son. Get a new roommate." I told him that I planned to put in a request as soon as I got back. But I thanked him for his advice. He told me, "Anytime, son. By the way, my name is Professor Spence Stire, but you can call me Spence. What's your name, son?" I told him that my name was Daniel. He said, "Nice to meet you, Daniel. Looking forward to having you in my class. See you tomorrow." I left the room and exited the building. I was incredibly hungry at the time, but I only had one thing on my mind at the moment: getting away from Greg.

Long story short, I got my room transfer away from Greg and I am now in an entirely different dormitory. To my shocking surprise, Greg was rather upset

about my request for a room change. But when I told him the reason, he just shook his head and said, "What the f\*\*k ever dude. Have fun being lame somewhere else I guess." It did take me a few hours to move in to my new room, but I know that it was the right decision to make. My new roommate's name is James, and I can already tell that we may not wind up being the best of friends, but he is already going to be one hundred percent better than Greg.

So that's all I've got for now, man. I promise though that I will write to you when I get a free moment. Until then, as always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

September 30th, 2012

Dear Peter,

I know it has been a few weeks since my last correspondence, but I have just been so busy here at college. Some days I do not get any sleep due to the immense workload of my classes. But I finally find myself in a position where all of my assignments have been completed and I finally have time to write to you again.

So, do you remember how I said that I was going to be looking forward to Professor Stire's ancient Greek mythology and literature course? That is no longer the case. In fact, I wish to high heaven that I could drop his class. I am telling

*you, Peter, he's relentless and brutal- - nothing like the first impression I got of him on the first day of class. I thought he was sort of going to be like a mentor, you know, help me out as I figure things out. But instead, he turned into a savage beast, heartlessly enjoying devouring me piece by piece. I know I am being a bit extreme, but it really is true. Let me give you an example of what I am talking about and then you will see what I mean.*

*For most classes the professor lays everything out in a neat, organized, and straightforward manner. They let you know exactly what assignment must be completed and what they expect from the student with regard to these assignments. And, what these professors expect is quite reasonable: they want the student to be able to demonstrate that they have read the text, given it some thought, and responded to the assignment appropriately. In other words, they want us to have a general understanding of what we were assigned to read. That is how literally almost every professor here on campus operates, but not professor Stire. Now, to be fair, he did tell me that he was different than any other professor, and that he wanted to challenge his students. But, Peter, there is a fine line between challenging your students and torturing your students. His reading assignments are double or sometimes triple the length of any of my other courses, and his assignments are incredibly vague and open-ended: asking us to provide our own interpretation as to why a character acted the way they did in a given circumstance, or to provide an*

*explanation as to why a certain text/character is so important. Do you see what I mean already, Peter? There is no correct answer to these questions. I have no idea what he is looking for with these questions. I tried one time to ask him if he could possibly elaborate on what he was looking for. Do you know what his answer was? He just smiled and said, "Figure it out. Use your head a little. Can't be spoon fed the answers for the rest of your life." And as if this were not bad enough, he does not lecture until every student (and I mean every student) has answered one of his questions. And since some of his questions are just as vague and open-ended as his assignments, nobody knows what to say. So, he will literally just grab a chair, spin it around and sit down with his arms crossed over the back and tell the students, "I get paid whether I lecture today or not. So, I can wait." Peter, we literally had three days of no lecture, because he just sat there, waiting for something. And when somebody finally chimed in with an answer, Professor Stire, shook his head and told them, "That was probably the worst answer I have ever heard in my life. Did you even think before you said that, or did you just hope that if you threw out some bull s\*\*t, that it would make me happy because you tried?" When the student did not answer, he said, "I thought as much. Everybody go home, class is done for the day." He is driving me out of my mind. There is no pleasing this man.*

*The worst part about this is that his midterm exam is coming up in a couple of weeks. I don't even want to know what he is going to expect for an exam.*

*Well, that's all I got for now. I have to get back to studying. I will let you know whether or not I will be finishing off my first semester of my college career with an F. Until then, as always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*October 10th, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*After yet another failed attempt to get anywhere with professor Stire, I decided that I would just try my best and hope that would be enough. I hoped that at least trying to be fully prepared and willing to participate in class would be enough to finally please him so that I could stop worrying so much about the class. As it turns out that was not even enough.*

*No, all my participation gets me is constant ridicule from the professor. He tells me all all of my suggestions and answers are, "pointless, stupid, trivial, and just incompetent." And you know, if I were not doing so well in all of my other classes, these comments might not bother me so much, but I am acing all of my other classes, so man this really gets under my skin. And he is merciless, he has actually started seeing me with my hand raised and will say, "Just put your hand*

down, Daniel. I don't have time to listen to your ignorant and uninspired attempts today." I really don't know what to do anymore. I have tried talking to some of my fellow classmates about whether or not they understand what to do, but everybody just says the same thing. They all tell me that they have no f\*\*\*ing clue what is going on and that they are pretty sure that they are going to fail the class and will have to try again next semester. This is a luxury that I don't have. I am only going here because I received a scholarship. And one of the requirements of the scholarship is that I maintain a certain G.P.A. Well, if I fail this stupid class, then I might as well start packing, because I will have failed out of college as well. I have come too far to allow this to happen. I simply cannot fail and go back to the farm. But I don't know how to prevent this from happening either. It just seems like this professor is out to get me.

In case you could not tell, I am completely freaking out at the moment. I have so much to study and yet I have no idea what I need to study. I guess I will just study everything and hope that I can remember all of that information come test time, which is two days away. So, I am going to go now and try to study before I pass out from exhaustion. Take care of yourself man. Wish me luck.

Later,

Daniel

October 16th, 2012

Dear Peter,

*Man, I have to tell you what just happened today. This could single handedly have been the most important day of my life, and I am not exaggerating.*

*So, after studying for Lord knows how many hours in an attempt to cram half a semester's worth of Greek literature into my memory banks, I finally felt like I was ready to take Professor Stire's exam. Or more to the point, I was as ready as I was ever going to be for the exam. I caught a quick twenty minute nap, woke up, grabbed my stuff and headed out. I made it a point to get to class ten minutes early just so I could take one last glance at my materials, you know, just in case my mind forgot anything while I was napping. But you know, as I was flipping through the materials, self-quizzing myself on characters, motives, plots, and important dialogue exchanges, I actually started to feel confident. I was having no problem with any of the information and for the first time since the first day of school, I was actually feeling really good about this class. I could not say the same for any of my fellow classmates. Most of them showed up with some paper and a pen/pencil, with the all-too-familiar look of hopelessness and helplessness that I had glimpsed in my own reflection many a time in the past weeks. The rest of them simply were eager to, "fail the damn thing and just get it the f\*\*k over with so they could go back to sleep." I could not help but feel a little bit proud and*



*maybe a bit cocky that I was going to do better than every single person in the class, because there was no way that I was going to fail this exam. However, that is when Professor Stire looked up at the clock, noting that it was time for class to start and handed out the exam.*

*If I had been able to see myself, I am pretty sure that my face would have looked like it had caved in, obliterating my once happy and confident smile with the resounding aura of despair and desperation. The questions on the exam were horrible. They were more open-ended than any of the previous assignments that I had barely managed to finish. And there I was, staring at eight, two-page, essay length questions that I only had an hour and a half to complete - and complete in a manner that was acceptable and pleasing to Professor Stire. I began to sweat, I got the chills, my stomach felt queasy, my head started pounding like someone was hammering an anvil inside my skull. I actually looked up and glared at Professor Stire. This jerk wanted me to fail. He wanted to sit at home in front of his fireplace and laugh at my failure. Well I was not going to give him the satisfaction. If I was going to go down, then I was going down swinging, just like my father had always told me.*

*I grabbed my pencil, and just began writing. I was no longer even thinking if what I was writing was right or wrong, and I did not care. I was going to finish this stupid exam and show Professor Stire that I was not intimidated by him*

*and his sadistic methods of torturing students for his own cruel and twisted amusement. Ten minutes turned into twenty, twenty into thirty, and before I knew it, Professor Stire was telling us that I only had five minutes left to complete the exam. It was at this point that I finally glanced up and noticed that I was the only student left in the classroom. Everybody else must have just given up and left. I went back to my essay, writing even more furiously than I previously had. By the time Professor Stire told me that I only had one minute remaining, I was writing faster than my eyes could move, all remains of penmanship vanished out the window. But it did not matter, because I was so close to being done.*

*When Professor Stire finally told me to stop writing and hand in my essay, I had to wipe the sweat stain off my desk. I did not even want to look at what I wrote, because I knew it was complete garbage. But I was so irate that I did not even care anymore. I did not even care that this was going to be the end of my college career, I had proven something to this man and that is all that mattered in the end. When I handed in my exam to Professor Stire, I must have still been glaring, because he asked, "Is there something the matter, Daniel? That's the second time that you have glared at me?" Peter, I lost it. I stared right at him and screamed, "You! You are the damn problem! You and your stupid a\*\* class and your stupid f\*\*\*ing assignments that make no damn sense, and the fact that there is no f\*\*\*ing pleasing you! Everything I say is wrong or stupid or*

*inconsequential or trivial or some other bull s\*\*t. I hate this class and I hate you! So just go ahead and grade my s\*\*tty exam, give me an F and let me get on with my f\*\*ing life!" Professor Stire just stared at me. He did not say anything. He did not look angry. He actually reminded me of my father when you had really pissed him off. I became a little scared. I decided it would be wise to make a hasty retreat out of there. Unfortunately, just as I started to leave, Professor Stire said, "Hold it, Daniel. Come back here."*

*I don't know why I obeyed him, seeing as I could have just left. I guess maybe, inside, I felt bad that I lost my temper. He gestured for me to stand in front of his desk, while he walked around it and sat down on the other side. I thought about apologizing, but Professor Stire, put his hand up and said, "Oh no. I think I have heard quite enough from you. And I will tell you, Daniel, you are lucky that I do not report this to the Dean of Students. That little vulgar rant of yours could easily get you booted out of this University. However, as it stands, I am not going to do that. Not because what you did was acceptable. It was not. But because you brought up two things that I wish to address. You said that there was no pleasing me correct?" I nodded my head that this was the case. "Well who the hell ever said that I wanted any of you to please me? It is no wonder that so many of you are failing this class if that is what you are trying to do. My job is not to simply have you please me. It is to cultivate your minds and to get each*

and every one of you to think. Do you know the reason why I tell you that your answers are trivial and inconsequential, Daniel?" I shook my head. "Daniel, all of your answers are grounded in nothing but textual facts. When I ask why is it important that something happened in the story, I do not care that it was essential to the plot. I want to know why you think it was important. I am interested in what you have to say on the matter, not why the author decided to include it. I could care less if you can regurgitate the text. A trained chimp can read and a child can recite to itself. Only an adult possesses the tools for deep and interesting thought processes. This is what I want from you and everyone else."

I was stunned. I could not speak. There were no words. My entire opinion of Professor Stire was flawed and distorted. He was not a savage monster who wanted to torture his students, he was a passionate and well educated man who was trying to better all of his students. He wanted us to think for ourselves. He cared what we had to say. All of this would, of course, take some time to sink in, but for that moment, all that needed to be said was that I was sorry. He just laughed and told me, "Daniel, you are not the first student to blow up and swear at me. But you are the first student who I actually think understands." I thanked him and asked him if I could go. He replied, "Well no. I said that you brought up two things that I wanted to address. I only addressed one. The other matter is the one about me going ahead and grading your exam." I was paralyzed with

fear, but there was nothing I could do. He looked through and read all of my answers, pen at the ready to make corrections. But when he got to the last page, he had not made one correction mark. He just flipped back to the first page, wrote something, and tossed it handed it back to me. "Well, Daniel, I have graded a lot of bull s\*\*t exams in my time, but this is the first time that I have awarded one a 100%. Keep this up Daniel, and you will do just fine."

I thought he was joking but there it was. In big bold font, a 100%. I could not speak. Professor Stire stood up, "Now you may go." I felt absolutely drained, my legs locked, but I did manage to make my way towards the door. As I reached the door, Professor Stire said, "Oh one more thing, Daniel." I turned around. "Whether shrouded in darkness or bathed in light, the answer will always lie within you. Think about it, Daniel."

It has been hours since this encounter, Peter, and I am still floored. I literally do not know how to describe what I am feeling inside. All I can say man is that I have never been so glad that I lost my temper in my entire life. I have to go now. I have a great deal to ponder for the time being. But do not worry, I will be in touch very soon. Until then, as always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

October 28th, 2012

Dear Peter,

I do not have a great deal of time to write to you, because I am once again swamped with classwork - finals week is rapidly approaching and it seems like every teacher has decided to play 'catch-up' with their syllabi. That is every teacher, except for Professor Stire. Speaking of Professor Stire, I have to tell you what happened after the whole mid-term revelation.

The first thing that I noticed was that every time he would ask a question to the class he would always glance in my direction, almost like he wanted me to show the other student's the 'way' so-to-speak. I must have disappointed him for a few days, because I was still a little gun shy about speaking up in class after having been so badly berated in the past. But Professor Stire proved to be much more stubborn than my own shy and hesitant resolve, because one day he just called on me outright for the answer. I was still scared and was almost about to say that I did not know when I remembered what Professor Stire had told me: "Whether shrouded in darkness or bathed in light, the answer will always lie within you." This gave me encouragement and renewed vigor. So, I stood up, and provided what I believed to be the best answer to his question. The rest of the class must have thought that what I said was silly because I could hear quite a few of them snickering and silently making fun of me. I looked down and saw Professor Stire

staring back at me with a big, beaming smile and he said, "That's quite interesting, Daniel. I guess I have never thought about it in that way before. Quite an ingenious way to interpret that scene. You are excused from answering for the rest of the day." Peter, I cannot tell you how good I felt then and there - it was simply incredible. I knew that I was going to be okay from that moment on. And sure enough, the following classes I raised my hand at the first question, provided my input, and then laughed inside while the rest of the class was berated for, as Professor Stire had put it, "not understanding".

As I prepare for finals week, I have already been assured by Professor Stire that as long as I don't revert back to how I was at the beginning of the semester, that I am assured an A in his class. And this means that if all goes according to plan, that I will be passing my first ever semester in college with a 4.0 grade point average. I am ecstatic! And I would love to tell you more man, but I have to get back to studying. Oh, and my father wrote me, asking if I could come and visit next weekend, so it might be a little while till our next correspondence. So until then, as always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

## Metropolis/Megalopolis

*November 2nd, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*Well, I just got back to my dormitory, and I am not sure how much time I will have to write because I am incredibly tired. Also, my roommate James is currently asleep and I do not want my desk lamp to wake him up - he is quite cranky and irate when he is woken up by anything but his alarm. Truth be told though I do not care that much if I do end up waking him up...let's just say that he and I have not been getting along that well lately. But that is a letter for next time. Right now, let me tell you about what happened when I went back home.*

*I ended up reading his letter again, because something about it worried me. It something about his tone that was problematic. He had a strong sense of urgency and immediacy, which generally meant bad news was not too far behind. I could not sleep that night. My clothes stuck to me, my head hurt, and I felt nauseated. I knew there was nothing wrong with me, but James thought I was going to drop dead on him because I looked so pale. I tried to tell myself that everything was going to be okay, but it had very little effect on my current situation. I had to resign myself to the fact that the next morning I would be driving back to*



*say goodbye to the farm, to my home, and to twenty years of my life, and all the memories that came with them. I decided that my alarm clock would not be needed, as there was no way that I was going to be able to fall asleep that night.*

*When I got into my car to leave for home, my eyes were completely bloodshot, my appearance haggard: I did not even bother to brush my teeth or shower, such was my despair at what I was going to have to do that day. I slammed a couple of espresso shots, hoping that in a couple hours, they would kick in to at least make sure that I did not fall asleep at the wheel and cause an accident. But as it turned out, the espresso did nothing but make me very twitchy. The thoughts that kept bouncing around inside my head were more than enough to keep me from falling asleep. At one point during my trip I turned the radio on and cranked the volume up to max. It did not matter what music was playing, because I was not really listening to any of it, I just wanted a lot of loud noise to distract me from my thoughts. I knew I was going to break down when I got to the farm, there was no need for me to start before that time. My father was going to be ten times more devastated than I was, and the last thing he would need is his son to arrive an uncontrolled mess. Despite my best efforts, I did eventually have to pull over to a rest stop. While inside, I dry heaved. After a few minutes I was finally able to compose myself and get back on the road. From the rest stop I only had about another twenty five minutes till I arrived at the farm.*

*When I pulled into the driveway I almost broke down again. The place looked better than it had in at least fourteen years: the barns looked like they had all been repainted, there was no sign of Bertha, the chicken coop had brand new wire strung around their coop and feeding area, and the entire corn crop had been harvested, there was not an ear of corn in sight. It was as if my worst fears had been confirmed. My father had been getting the farm ready to sell to one of those big name investors that had been pressuring him for years. I felt so guilty right then and there. Had I just stayed and forgotten about pursuing my own path through life, then none of this would be happening. My father had told me that he was lacking the resources and finances to do the upkeep on the farm, and I still decided to go to college, to let him and my mother fend for themselves. And what had happened as a result of my selfish actions? They were losing their home. And my dad was losing his family's heritage and legacy. I no longer could contain it. My legs turned to jelly, and I began to wish that I was back at the rest stop. I fell to the ground, trying not to scream.*

*My father must have heard me pull into the driveway, because he came out just as my crying fit had begun. He walked over to me, knelt down on one knee, crossed his arms over his knees, like when I was a kid and had crashed my bicycle, and asked me, "What's the matter, Daniel?" I tried to speak but all I could say was I'm sorry over and over again. My dad got a really puzzled look on his face,*

*"Sorry? What the hell are you sorry for? The farm has never looked better." I thought that my father was trying to rub in the fact that he was going to have to sell the farm despite how nice he had worked to make it. This angered me a little, but it also rang a little too true. After all, this was my fault. I decided that he deserved to berate me and to make me suffer. I told him that the farm looked great and that I was so sorry that he was having to sell it. My father's face went from looking puzzled to flabbergasted. "Sell it? The farm? Why the f\*\*k would I sell this place? I am going to die on this farm, Daniel. Nobody is going to buy it from me." Now I was confused. I asked him if he was not going to sell it, then why did he make all of the changes to it, and why did he ask me to come back so soon. He smiled and said, "Whoever said that I made all of the changes?" Now I was totally at a loss. I tried to say something but my father cut me off, "Come on, I want to show you something." I took my father's hand, stood up, and then followed him.*

*When I turned the corner and went inside the barn where we keep the cows, I could not believe what I saw. Directly in front of me, were little automated helpers, milking the cows. My father saw me in my state of bewilderment and said, "Turns out these little b\*\*\*rds are actually pretty useful. They have effectively doubled the production output of our operation, which is what allowed me to pay somebody to come and make all of the repairs on the farm." All I could say was*

*that he had always sworn that he would never ever allow one of those things on his farm. He chuckled and replied, "True. But then I remembered what you said, Daniel. You told me that as long as I didn't lose touch with who I was, then I had nothing to worry about. And you know what, you were right. I still do a great deal of work on the farm, but for the stuff that I just don't have time for or for the stuff that would require too many costly materials, why not let these little b\*\*\*\*rds do it and help me make money so that I can keep the farm looking as great as it should look." I had to admit that I saw nothing wrong with what he had just said. I was so relieved that I became choked up. My father understood and put his arm around me and said, "You will always have a home to come back to, Daniel. Now what say we go inside and get something to eat. I think your mother made pancakes." I smiled and told him to lead the way.*

*Is that not incredible? My father using automated help on his farm and what I thought was going to be the worst trip of my life, ended up being one of the greatest. I wish I could tell you more but I hear James starting to stir and I really do not want to deal with him right now. So I will go ahead and end this letter here. Until then, as always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*November 16th, 2012*

*Dear Peter,*

*Finals are coming up in a few weeks, so I figured I would write to you before the madness that is studying takes over my life for the better part of two weeks. Do you remember how I said that I was not getting along very well with my roommate James? Well things have not gotten better. I have even tried to get yet another room change, but this time they said that I was just going to have to deal with it. Allow me to elaborate on why I have grown most dissatisfied with James.*

*To be fair though, it is not truly James that has been making my school life difficult, but rather his annoying and overbearing television watching. Every day, I swear he parks himself in front of the television and watches almost whatever show happens to be on for periods that can last anywhere from two to ten hours. This behavior baffles me. I know that he is taking more classes than me, which means that he has double the assignments, and yet he refuses to not watch the television. Honestly, I have no idea how he has not failed out yet, because I have never actually seen him study or do homework. In fact, I am not altogether sure that he leaves the room at all. As you are already aware, I have an incredibly hard time concentrating when there is a lot of noise around me. Well, James's television watching not only provides constant noise but late at night it also provides my eyes*

*with a headache inducing flashing light show. I have tried to go elsewhere to do my assignments and to study, but it seems like my room is the only quiet place that exists on campus. Even the library sounds more like a gymnasium or lunch hall than a quiet place to study and read. I have asked James several times if he would not mind going somewhere else for a little while until I finish studying/complete my assignments, to which he has always responded, "No. It's my room too. I can watch T.V. if I want. You can either deal with that or you can get the f\*\*k out." And as frustrating as this has been, I have to admit that he has a valid point. It is his room and he is not doing anything disruptive or illegal, so technically there is no reason for him to stop. Still, I just wish he would have some compassion once in a while so that I can finish my studies in peace.*

*However, even the constant television watching is not what truly bothers me. It is the fact that he can never find a show that he wants to watch. He constantly flips through channels, thereby causing a flickering of lights that would make an epileptic have a seizure, and a cacophony of sound that I swear is going to drive me insane. And then there is the stupid advertising. I must hear the same, "Got a frown because life's got you down? Cheer up with a couple of bottles of Brown." commercial at least twenty times a day. Does anybody actually buy into that slogan garbage. I mean come on, drinking a beer is not going to make your day or*

*your life suddenly better. I could go on and on, but then this letter would take days to finish. Suffice to say, I have grown quite disgusted with television and with my roommate's refusal to quit watching it. Despite all of this, I have somehow managed to do well in all of my classes so far. But I tell you Peter, I am getting close to reaching my breaking point.*

*I hate to cut this short, but I think I hear James coming back now, and well, you know. Until then, as always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*February 8th, 2013*

*Dear Peter,*

*Okay, first of all, I want to apologize for not writing to you for two months. And I know that you are probably getting tired of hearing that I have been so busy... but it is the truth. I have barely had any time to catch my breath between semesters: it was almost as if as soon as the previous one ended the next one began. Oh, and speaking of last semester, I passed. I do not know how I managed to pull it off, what with James's incessant television watching, but I pulled it out in the end. My father even sounded happy for me when I told him that I had aced my first semester. Hopefully, I can produce the same results for this semester, even though it is looking incredibly unlikely. About the only thing that I am looking forward to*

*this semester is Professor Stire's literature course (this time he is teaching 'Love and Sex in the Modern Novel'), which should prove to be incredibly interesting and should be fun to boot. My other classes, on the other hand, not so much.*

*Speaking of my other classes, let me tell you about the predicament that I find myself in.*

*It was the first day of the new semester and I was attending my first class of the day. I was incredibly tired, because it was seven thirty in the morning and I had not been able to fall asleep till very early in the morning because James stayed up almost all night watching television. Oh, and the class? History, which as you know is right up there with Math for subjects that I cannot stand. So there I was, over-tired, doing everything in my power to simply keep my eyes from shutting. It did not help that the professor spoke in an incredibly monotone voice and was just reading verbatim from the syllabus that they had handed out moments ago. I almost passed out until the professor started talking about the assignments for the class. We would be required to write five research papers, no less than fifteen pages, and we were to read over one hundred pages before each class. I would like to add that this class meets three times a week, so to say that I was a little taken aback by this news would be an understatement. I held out some hope that the professor was joking, playing a very mean and cruel prank on the class, but that hope completely faded when I saw the 'I am dead serious' expression on the*



professor's face. To make matters worse, there was also going to be a quiz every day as well as take home writing assignments. Still, despite all of this, I remained positive. Sure, it would mean that this semester would make the previous one seem like a cakewalk, but I knew that in the end I would succeed. And that is when they stated that all written assignments must be typed, no exceptions.

Up until now, I had been able to work out some kind of arrangement with my professors that would allow me to hand write my assignments. I had never used a word processor and I had no intention to start: after all, there was nothing wrong with writing things out by hand. Professor Stire actually loved the fact that I was willing to write everything out by hand. He commented more than once on my near perfect grammar and professional penmanship. I remember one day that he actually pulled me aside after class and said, "I think you are seriously one of the last few remaining people at this university that not only can read cursive, but can write it as well. Never lose that, Daniel." But here was this professor, who was already demanding far more than any student could provide, laying down this absurdly rigid law of no handwritten assignments. I decided that I would wait until after class to see if I could not work something out with this professor.

When I approached the professor after class, they seemed to be perturbed that I wanted to talk to them. And when I did ask if there was any way that I could write out my assignments, they responded, "No." They must have thought that this

would be enough to get rid of me because they started to turn to leave the room.

When I stopped them and asked again, they sighed, turned around and said, "Look. I told you there were no exceptions to this rule. And why would you want to write things out by hand anyways? Typing takes less time." I told them that I did not care if it took more time, it just felt more organic to me. I tried to tell them that my penmanship was up to a professional quality and that they would have no problem reading my papers, but they cut me off mid-sentence and told me, "I could not care less about your penmanship. I will not accept any paper that is not typed. So, it is up to you. You can quit complaining and type your papers, or you can be stubborn and hand in something that is not typed and receive an automatic zero on the assignment. Now, if you do not mind I have a great deal better things to do than waste my time arguing with a student over something so trivial." I wanted to say something, but decided that it would simply be best to let them leave.

So that is where I find myself. Either I type this paper or I start the class out with a zero, which is the worst way to start off any class. But the problem is that I do not know what to do. The obvious answer is to simply type the paper and be done with it, but that is not so easy to do when you have never really used a computer keyboard before. And the one time that I did use one, I had to ask for help. And then there is the feeling that I get when I try to use one. It just does not feel right. Children learn to write by hand for a reason; that is the way that it

should be. I do not care if it is quicker or easier, it is wrong and inorganic plain and simple. But I refuse to get a zero on this assignment. If only I had a lot of disposable money, then I would write out my paper by hand and just pay somebody to type it out for me. But that is not going to happen, so I find myself back at square one. I guess I have no choice but to try, seeing as the paper is due in a week. Do not worry, I will tell you all about this event, as I am sure that it will surely end in disaster.

Alright man I got to get to bed as it is rather late and I want to try to fall asleep before James gets back. Until next time, as always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

February 13th, 2013

Dear Peter,

Remember in the last letter that I said that I was just going to push through all of my concerns and complaints with the assignment and type the paper? Well, after I sent that letter out to you, I decided to write my dad and ask him for his advice on the matter. Regardless of how he might still be not one hundred percent in favor of me being at college, I have always been able to rely on him when it came

*to important decisions. Well, today I got my response back from him and I wanted to share with you what he had to say on the matter.*

*Daniel,*

*I received your last letter in which you seem to be having some kind of trouble with a teacher over there at the college. Look, Daniel, I'll be honest with you here. You're a grown man, Daniel and I'm very proud of you, and I never want you to forget that. That being said, I can't make any of your decisions for you anymore, nor should you be having to ask me advice about decisions that are one hundred percent yours to make. Besides, you know how much I hate computers and all of that newfangled technology shit, so you already know what my answer would be given your current circumstance. If I were you, I would tell that teacher to take his attitude and his technology and shove them up his ass so that they could be a part of him since he apparently loved them so fucking much. And I wouldn't give two shits about getting kicked out of his class or even getting kicked out of college for that matter, because farming is what I was born to do, not that academic shit. But I'm not you, Daniel. And you are the only person who can make decisions for you from now on. Just know this, Daniel. Whatever decision you decide to make, I will support you one hundred percent. And if the worst should ever happen, you will always have a home to come back to, Daniel. Take care of yourself, son, and I hope things continue to go well for you in your new environment.*

*Always with love,*

*Dad*

*So that settles it, I am going to type this stupid paper . Until then, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*February 15th, 2013*

*Dear Peter,*

*As promised I am writing to tell you about my experience with typing my first paper using one of those word processing programs. Oh my goodness what an incredibly frustrating, yet somehow rewarding experience it ended up being.*

*It was incredibly early in the morning, James had just passed out (probably due to drinking, he has been doing that a lot recently), and I decided that it was now or never. I sat down at my desk, turned on the computer, the low and steady hum filling the otherwise empty air. I was immediately blinded by the incredible yet soft brightness of the background, which I guess is referred to as the desktop. I scoured the screen looking for anything that said 'word processing', but I did not see anything that resembled this description. After five minutes of blind double-clicking, hoping to stumble upon the program that I wanted and needed, I decided to go ask somebody for help. I must admit that my residence hall captain made me feel incredibly stupid when he gave me an incredibly blank look that seemed to say, 'Are you messing with me?' This feeling only intensified when he actually realized that I was serious and his expression was one of somebody whose mind had just been*

blown. He invited me into his room, flipped open his computer and showed me which program I was looking for, *Type-it*. In my defense, I was only looking for something that said it was a word processor, I had no idea that I was looking for something with a catchy title. I thanked my residence hall captain profusely and left his room. I could hear him laughing as I walked down the hall, but I was not upset, after all, the situation was quite comical and absurd. Not to mention the fact that I had one single thought on my mind: typing my paper, which coincidentally was due the next morning. I opened my door, James stirred and grumbled a little, I sat back down at my desk, double-clicked on *Type-it* and prepared myself for what awaited me.

The program presented me with a blank page with a blinking cursor. The menu bar presented me with many options, but I did not care about that, I was only interested in typing out my paper. The warm, plastic feel of the keys took me quite some time to get used to. Each clumsy press of a letter made me wish that I had my trusty pencil between my fingers. By the time that I got through one sentence, the screen was littered with red squiggles. I did not know what this meant, but then I saw that everything that I had typed was spelled incorrectly. I thought that this was a neat little feature, the ability to see if you have made an error before you were completely done writing. I hit the delete button until the sentence was erased and tried again. This time when I was finished there were no red squiggles, so I

*decided to keep typing, periodically looking up at the screen to see if there were any errors. Surprisingly I made it through a couple of pages before any red squiggles appeared. But then I started to notice that green squiggles were popping up.*

*This confused me because the words that had these squiggles under them were spelled correctly. Still, I deleted and retyped them, but the green squiggle mark still came up. That is when I noticed that the green squiggle was also showing up under punctuation marks. I thought, okay so this is the grammatical error notification.*

*I was about to say that this was also a good feature until I noticed that it was wrong. It was telling me to put a semi-colon instead of a comma, when grammatically speaking, there was no issue with using a comma. And likewise with telling me that my use of colons was incorrect or my word choice was incorrect. I do not know a great many things in this world, but I know the rules of grammar. I decided to simply ignore the green squiggles and continue forward. I did not encounter any more snags until my paper was completely written.*

*It had taken me twenty two hours to finish, but I was officially done. Now I just needed to format the paper before I printed it. The only problem was that I had no idea how to do this. I must have looked everywhere to try to figure out how to double space the paper (or document). Seriously, this program did not make it easy. I looked under the 'documents' tab, the 'tools' tab, and even the 'format' tab, but I did not see anything that said 'double space'. I actually had to click on the*

'help' tab and ask. As it turns out, in order to 'double space', you have to set the paragraph spacing to be double. Well, that was one problem solved. But then there was the issue of margins. I figured that this had to be in the 'format' tab, so I scoured every single option available, but it was not there. Ten minutes and one 'help' tab assist later, I discovered that you needed to set the margins in the 'page setup' tab. How was I supposed to guess that? 'Page setup' sounds like the option that I would use to determine how the page should look, not how wide or narrow the margins needed to be. And I am not even going to get into how long it took me to figure out how to send my paper electronically to the printer at the front desk. Needless to say, my residence hall captain had plenty to laugh about.

By the time I scrambled downstairs to grab my paper, it was already almost time to go to class. I barely had time to get properly dressed and grab my backpack. When I handed in my paper, the professor looked at me and said, "See. That wasn't so bad." I wanted to punch him in the face, because yes, yes it d\*\*n well was bad. It was horrible. I was so tired after class that I went back to my dormitory and collapsed in my bed and slept through all of my other classes.

So there you have it. I am a complete and utter failure when it comes to word processing programs. But you know what; I am completely okay with this. I prefer to write things out by hand anyways. Although, I have to admit, the constant and instant reminder that you have misspelled a word was pretty cool.



*That is all I have for right now. Until next time, as always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*March 3rd, 2013*

*Dear Peter,*

*Well, the past couple weeks have been incredibly confusing and hectic. To begin with, my History professor assigned us a surprise research paper. I seriously do not know what is wrong with this guy, but I can clearly see why he gets the nickname, "The D\*\*\*tator". I could personally think of a whole slew of other names that would be equally as appropriate, but I shall refrain for the time being. But seriously, a surprise research paper, can you believe that? What is worse is that this class is running me into the ground so hard that I barely have the energy for any of my other classes, which is terrible because I love Professor Stire's class. But lately, my assignments have not been up to standard. Professor Stire has pulled me aside after class and mentioned his concern, which has begun to freak me out because I did not think that my struggling had become so obvious. Oh, and guess who is not helping the situation in the slightest? Yeah, my stupid a\*\**

roommate. I swear I am going to smother him when he sleeps one of these days.

Let me tell you about what I have been dealing with recently.

Remember how I had told you that James was starting to drink quite frequently, many times coming back to the room absolutely drunk and passing out? Well, it has gotten much worse lately. Now, he drinks in the afternoons, sometimes even in the room. He misses classes because he is too hung-over to even function. He sometimes even drinks every day of the week, no longer waiting for the weekend. I am pretty sure that he has been fired from whatever job he was working at due to lack of attendance. And if he does not get his act together, he will most likely fail the semester. Now, it may sound cruel and unfeeling of me to say, but I would not care about any of this in the slightest if it were not affecting me, but it is. I am the one that he screams at before passing out. I have the bruises on my face from when he slugged me because I told him to go to bed. And I am the one losing countless hours of sleep because of his incessant television watching. And this last issue is so much worse when he has been drinking. Normally, he will just turn the television on and channel surf, but when he is drunk, his television watching becomes very regimented. I have actually had to start planning out my day so that I can avoid being in the same room during these times. Unfortunately, the shows that he watches are spaced out in such weird intervals that I have been spending more time in the basement of the dormitory than in my bedroom. And before you ask, yes I

*have tried to put in for a room transfer, especially because of his erratic and hazardous behavior when he is drinking. As of yet, my residence hall captain has not gotten back to me on this issue.*

*To make matters worse I have had to work on this stupid surprise research paper which had been proving to be rather difficult. I am still more or less slogging my way through this whole word processor problem of mine. I can now make it through four or five pages before I start to see the squiggles. However, I did discover that if you right click on the squiggle, a menu pops out that provides a list of possible correct choices. Admittedly, this has saved me a great deal of time: I can just right click and choose rather than erase and rewrite the whole word. But other than that I still despise typing my papers. Still, my History professor will not accept anything else, so I guess I will have to learn to tolerate this unfamiliar process.*

*Oh, one last thing. Have you ever tried to use the Internet to find resources in order to write a paper? I would not wish this headache on my worst enemy man. It is such a cumbersome and hopeless process. You go onto a search engine and type in your subject, only to be bombarded with over a million possible sites related to your subject. And at first you think that this is a good thing, but then you find out that almost all of the sites are complete garbage...or worse. How in the world can a history subject be related in any way, shape, or form to an adult website, I*

*will never know. I mentioned my frustration to Professor Stire and he told me, "You have my sympathies, Daniel. The internet is nothing more than a smorgasbord of useless crap with a few rare valuable gems buried somewhere underneath. And personally, I never found that it was worth the digging." What a wise man. I hope that one day I can become so wise.*

*Well that is all I have for right now. I have to wrap this up so that I can get back to digging through the 'smorgasbord of crap' so that I can finish this paper. Also, it is getting close to time for one of James' shows to start, and I refuse to be here when he comes in to watch. I wish that I had some friends. Maybe then I could do my homework at their place - I have to go Peter, I can hear James staggering down the hall. Until next time, as always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

*March 10th, 2013*

*Dear Peter,*

*Today was a very interesting day. Today, I realized that I must have a room change. Let me explain what James did to me today.*

*James and I were sitting in our room at our computer desks: James was surfing the internet for funny videos and I was trying to find reliable resources on the Internet for yet another paper that I had to write. All of a sudden, something started blinking at the bottom of the screen. Normally, I would ignore any distractions, because I am trying to study or do research, but today I was having a much harder time finding anything that could even be classified as remotely useful as far as research is concerned, so I clicked on it and a message box popped up. It was a message from James, and according to him, the video that he provided the link for was the funniest fucking thing that he has ever seen. Now, we have been having our problems with one another, but I was in the mood to laugh so I clicked the link and brought up the video.*

*The video started off harmless enough. It was some overweight kid sitting on a bike that was two sizes too small for him, and his friends were filming him from some kind of hand-held camera. This is where I thought the video was going to end. After all, it was pretty funny just seeing a fat kid sitting on a bike that did not fit him. But the video continued. The kid started riding his bike and his*

friends followed him with the camera. Then I thought to myself that the kid was going to fall off of the bike or that the bike would break under his weight. Again, either of these scenarios would have been funny. However, what actually happened was not funny...it was terrifying. The kid began pedaling faster and faster, heading straight towards a concrete wall. He just kept pedaling and pedaling, no sign of swerving or stopping anywhere in sight. I actually started talking to the computer screen, telling him to stop. As he got closer, I began to feel uneasy, the hairs on my neck stood on end, my arms started to tighten, and I began to raise my voice, imploring this foolish kid to stop. The moment before he smashed into the wall, I actually screamed, which startled James so much that he fell out of his chair. When the kid hit the wall, the bike crumpled into a heap, he was ejected face first into the unforgiving concrete. As his friends got closer, the blood was running down his face like sand in an hourglass. His friends went into a full panic, powerless to do anything, the sound of horror gripping their voices as they ran to try and find help. The movie ended at this moment, but I still saw his bloody face, that emotionless stare. It pierced right through me and gripped my soul with its icicle like fingers and numbed me to the bone. James got up and asked me what the hell my problem was. I lashed out at him and told him that he was a sick mother f\*\*\*er and that I never wanted him to send me another god d\*\*\*n video

*again. He looked puzzled for a moment, then he simply just told me that he was going to head out for a bit and come back after I had calmed the f\*\*k down.*

*Man, what was he thinking. People hurting themselves is not funny, it is serious business. That poor kid could have shattered his jaw. Hell that poor kid could have been killed. Seriously, I have got to get away from James. That is all that I really have to say right now, so until next time, as always, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

March 20th, 2013

Dear Peter,

I apologize in advance if this letter is somewhat different than what you are used to. But seeing as I will only get good at typing the more I practice, I figured I would try to type you a letter instead of writing one. Please let me know if this is going to be an issue in the future, but I am really hoping that you will understand considering that this is a skill that I must master if I am ever to escape this semester intact. I promise, though, once this semester is complete, then it is back to the natural, organic handwritten letters that you told me you have been covering your wall with.

So to begin with, I got a letter from my father that I had to read three times and even called him later to make sure that my eyes were not deceiving me. My father

bought a computer! Can you believe that, or better yet, can you even conceive of my father doing this? Allowing automated help to be on the farm was one thing. After all he bought them because he could no longer do some of the tasks that were required to maintain the farm. But a computer? There was no reason for him to buy one. I even told him so myself when I called him from the payphone outside of the dormitory. His response was pretty odd. He simply said, "Well why the hell not? Maybe it will prove to be useful." I was a little worried that something was wrong, until he added, "and if the thing turns out to be a piece of s\*\*t, then I can use it as kindling for the fireplace." I chuckled at this statement, deciding not to correct him by telling him that burning the components of a computer would produce toxic fumes that would be harmful to breathe. I was more relieved that my father still seemed to be himself. Besides, he was joking like he always does. Still, I am glad that he has finally starting coming around to realizing that technology is not the anti-Christ.

And along those same lines, I have begun to give television a chance. Now, please do not judge me Peter. Hear me out instead. Look, the fact is that I have been going to this university for almost a year now and I have not made one friend. I know I alluded to this in a previous letter, but that was simply because I did not want to get into how hard this has been for me recently. People see me as an outcast, a loner, and worse, a loser. I have tried my best to talk academics to some of the so-called nerdy students, but even they are more interested in talking about something that happened in a video-game they were playing online or some television show that they watched the other night. Television has actually become so popular that the university has implemented a



'New Media Studies' major that will become official next semester. So far there have been so many people who have wanted to be in this major that the university had to put a cap limit on how many students could actually join and who would have to just take various classes until a spot opened up. This major has no appeal to me. I want to teach English. I do not think that television is worthy of study; it is simply entertainment. Still, I have been so lonely that I have contemplated taking a few classes, just so I might be able to bond with some of my classmates.

It has proven to be difficult, though. Every single popular show that I have tried to watch is so horrible. The plot lines are either clichéd, contrived, or simply stupid. There seems to be no character development, unlike in classic literature in which we see some of the great protagonists and antagonists. And the worst part is of course the ridiculous commercials that play their mindless jingles while spouting nonsensical slogans, whose sole purposes are to convince the masses to purchase something that they truly do not need. I have thought that maybe I could just mute the commercials, but sometimes the commercials are what people on campus discuss. So, I grit my teeth, turn my brain off, and try to become a willing participant in this hollow forest of noise and chatter that so many students have all but become obsessed with. I do not know if my plan will prove to be a success or if I will rip my hair out and scream, but I have no other choice, I must try. I almost wish I was where you were Peter. At least then, not having friends would not be such a big deal. But that is not the case here. Do not worry though, this is only so that I can talk to people and maybe gain a friend or two.

After that, I am done with this television watching business. I will not become sucked into this crap like so many others here.

That is all I have for right now. I must return to my bedroom and try to watch yet more television that I will never be able to understand why people think it is amazing.

Until next time, as always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

## Parasitopolis

March 30th, 2013

Dear Peter,

I really do not feel like writing due to the fact that today has been terrible. However, I made you a promise, so the least I can do is keep it. Let me tell you what happened today and perhaps you will understand why I am so down in the dumps right now.

As you know, today is my birthday. Specifically, it is my twenty-first birthday. I always had such grand ideas of how much fun I was going to have on this day. Remember when we talked about dressing up like chickens and going bar to bar demanding that everybody “Please the cock or else”? I remember we laughed for hours just thinking about that. But, things did not turn out the way we thought they would, did they? And I know that you have always told me not to let it bother me, and I have been doing pretty good, but man, today I really wish you could have been here. Long story short, there was no celebrating, and I have spent almost all day sitting in my room, not even knowing how to express what I am feeling. Our University President, Sam Gobney, officially announced today that there would no longer be an English major at the university. He said they needed the extra money in order to afford equipment and such for the New Media Studies classes. He also said that there were probably going to be more cuts in the future, but we would cross that bridge when it came to it. He also

suggested that any student who was currently enrolled in the English program consider switching to the New Media Studies major. Man I was devastated. In the span of a couple of minutes, my life literally got flipped upside down. All I have ever wanted to do since high school was become an English teacher. And now, that will never come to pass. Sure, I could switch majors and probably become a New Media Studies teacher, but it would not be the same. The classes that I have been taking so far have tried their best to masquerade as serious academic courses by “looking deeper into television and film”, analyzing structure, plot, and character development. But the fact is the things we have looked at are just meaningless entertainment; there is nothing to them. So the thought of teaching this subject is kind of scaring the shit out of me.

But that is not the worst part. When a couple of the English professors voiced their disgust and concern for this announcement, the President said, “Look guys, it’s not like this is something new. You all knew that this was probably going to happen eventually. Besides, there is no reason for any of you to worry, because you’re not being fired. You will simply become integrated into the rest of the faculty that we have hired to teach New Media Studies.” Surprisingly, almost all of the professors nodded their head in approval and relief...except for Professor Stire. He stood still like a statue, fists clenched, the rage boiling up inside, coloring his face. I thought for a minute he was going to explode right there and then. But instead, he just tilted his head up towards the sky, exhaled slowly, muttered something to himself, and asked the President if he might have a word with him. The President must have known what Professor Stire wanted to say, because when he walked over, he said, “Spence. This is neither the time

nor the place and you know that.” Professor Stire apparently did not care, because he grabbed the President by the collar and punched him in the face; blood began to drip from the President’s nose like water from a leaking faucet. Everybody was stunned. Nobody knew what was going to happen next or if they should try to intervene. But Professor Stire just stood there, towering over the President. Then he slowly turned his head and made eye contact with me. He beckoned me towards him. I hesitated at first, but something in my gut told me to trust him, so I walked over to. And when I was standing right beside him, he grabbed me, pulled me in close, and whispered “Never forget what I told you Daniel. No matter what happens. Never forget.” Then he released me, turned back to the President, who was trying to stand back up, and said, “Consider that my notice, you piece of shit.” And then Professor Stire just walked toward the parking lot.

So not only did my major get cut, but I also lost a great teacher and the only person I was close to at this university. Coincidentally, I did not go to any of my classes today. I have just been sitting in my room. The stupid television has been on all day, a cruel and unnecessary reminder of what transpired. The only thing I want to do is drink and have this feeling go away. Not exactly the type of drinking I thought I would do on my birthday, but who knows, maybe those stupid commercials are right, you know the one: “Got a frown because life’s got you down? Cheer up with a couple of bottles of Brown.” Some birthday, huh?

I think that is enough writing for today. I am going to go drown my sorrows with some ale. Do not worry, I will dedicate the first bottle to you. As always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

March 31st, 2013

Dear Peter,

This morning felt like hell. Okay, I guess it only felt like hell inside my head. That stupid commercial never said anything about how horrible it feels to be hung over. Fortunately, my roommate James was in the exact same shape, so for the first time since moving in together, we had something in common. He reached into his dresser drawer and pulled out two tablets and swallowed them. When I asked what he just took, he told me that he had taken 'drink-away'. I confessed that I had no idea what that was. He replied, "You know, hang-over pills. Like they say, 'Just pop two and we'll get you through.'" I asked if I could have a couple. He reached back into his dresser drawer, grabbed two pills and handed them to me. I popped them both in my mouth and slowly let them dissolve on my tongue. God, they tasted terrible, like swallowing dirt, but James was right, they worked. And, man, did they work quick! I went from being hung-over to sober in minutes. That's when I noticed the clock and realized that I had to get to class. I should tell you that I dropped the class that Professor Stire was teaching. The person who they got to replace Professor Stire was horrible, and made me

not want to go anymore. It has only been a week or so since he left, but the university still does not quite feel the same without Professor Stire. I am sure that in time, it will be okay, but I am still reeling from it and probably will be for some time.

I must admit that these New Media Studies Professors are actually quite understanding and laid back. I arrived twenty minutes to class and the Professor just commended me on making it to class, especially since it was still “early in the day for a college student”. This class is between 1:50-2:50 in the afternoon, which is hardly “early in the day”. And I eventually ended up leaving before class was over, so it was a waste of my time to even go today. And no, I am not becoming lazy; it is simply because it was the same exact thing that we have been doing for weeks. All we do is watch television shows and the professor asks us questions about what we just watched. And this formula does not vary with any of the other classes. The only difference might be watching movies instead of television shows. I am not sure but I am almost positive that the professors will accept anything that you say as being correct. I have heard some responses that seemed to be completely, and utterly, stupid, yet the professor says that they are great. I tell you, man, my brain has been starved of any intellectual challenge for quite some time. I have even resorted to doing crossword puzzles on the internet. Oh, and that is another thing. Since these classes are such a joke, I have more free time than I know what to do with. At first it was nice, considering I was so used to having to pull all-nighters in order to simply survive a class, but after a week, I grew to hate it. I think I am beginning to see why so many people drink on this campus. And why not? Provided you have a steady supply of 'drink-away' pills, you can drink till you pass out

and suffer absolutely no consequences the next morning. Believe me, I have come close to testing this theory out.

As much as I complain about these New Media Studies being a joke, it has been nice to not have to stress out so much or worry that I am going to be wrong. It is a nice bit of reassurance that I just need to participate and put forth the bare minimum amount of effort in order to ace a class. Additionally, since I have been on the internet so much recently, James has started to befriend me.

Still, overall, I really miss the way that things used to be. Potential friendships and somewhat nice free-time aside, I came to college to succeed in life. However, that does not mean that I should not indulge myself a little right? After all, I did earn the right to have a little fun now and then.

That is all that I have for now. Until next time, as always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel



April 20th, 2013

Dear Peter,

I do not really have a lot of time to talk right now, because I am on my way out the door. I am actually going to my first party. James has been pestering me for a while to go out with him, and today I finally caved into his request. And yes, James and I are now officially friends. Turns out that we both like the same goofy things on the internet. Which by the way is why I am writing to you today. I have got to tell you about this funny video that James sent me the other day.

I was hopelessly trying to figure out a crossword puzzle, when my messenger icon started blinking. Normally, I would ignore it until I was finished, but I had more than half of the puzzle unsolved, so I decided to open it up. I saw that James had sent me a link to a video titled 'Idiot kid face plants into wall on bike'. At first I thought that James was yanking my chain. There was no way that the video with such a blatantly obvious description would not turn out to be something else entirely. By the way, the last time that James did that to me, let me just say that I got into a little bit of trouble with the campus internet moderators. James thought it was hilarious, I not so much. But the title intrigued me, so I clicked on the link. A message popped up asking me if I was sure if I wanted to re-watch the video. I found this odd, because I had never watched this video before. I just chocked it up to computer error and clicked yes, so that I could watch the video. Oh my God, man, it was hilarious. It is this fat kid who literally rides his bike straight into a wall. And when his bike hits the wall, he falls over the handlebars, smashing his face directly into the wall. There is quite a bit of blood on the

ground and the kid does mention that he thinks he broke his jaw, but I was laughing so hard that I did not care. I even pinpointed exactly where he hits the wall in the video so I could watch it over and over again. I mean, it is horrible that the kid probably broke his jaw, but seriously what was he thinking? Anybody with half a brain knows what the end result of 'bike + wall' is. God, I laughed so hard that I actually became sick. James was pretty pissed that I puked all over the floor. I told him that it was his own goddamn fault, because he sent me the link. Oh man, I wish you could have seen this video. I know that you told me in a previous letter about the strict policies regarding computer usage that you have to follow, but man, if you ever get the chance, please watch this because you will piss your pants from laughing.

But I got to go right now, James is tapping at his watch. As always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

April 21st, 2013

Dear Peter,

Oh man do I have a story to relate to you today man. I just want to clarify one thing before I begin, though. Regardless of how bad the things I am describing seem, I assure you that I was always fully in control of the situation. Remember this is me we are talking about here. So, without any further delay, let me tell you about my first college party experience.

As I said in my last letter, James had been pestering me for quite some time to accompany him to a party, and I finally decided that accepting his offer would probably be for the best in the long run. After all, this party might help to truly solidify our friendship, and that was an opportunity that I did not wish to pass up on. Still, I was more than a little worried about going. I mean, what if I could not hold my alcohol and ended up doing something I would regret. Worse yet, what if I got so drunk that somebody could convince me to take something or smoke something, which might lead to... my skin crawled at the very thought. But, like I said, this was going to be a huge step in becoming real good friends with James, instead of our just being two guys who shared funny internet videos back and forth with each other. So, in the end, I decided that I would go ahead and attend the party, but I promised myself that there was no way that I was going to let myself get carried away and find myself in a situation I could not control. So, I changed into some clothes that I did not care too much about, told James I was ready to go, and away we went.

James and I walked for about twenty minutes before arriving at our destination. To say that this place looked like it should have been condemned was a complete understatement. The house was only a house in the sense that it had not completely collapsed to the ground in a pile of wood, cement, plaster, and roofing. The stairs leading up to the porch were completely rotted through in certain places, forcing people to be cautious about where they stepped, lest they risk their legs falling through. The paint on the outside was all-but completely stripped away, displaying a complete lack of water proofing, and sealant, which as I learned from my father, was a necessity for

keeping the outside of our house looking like it was brand new despite the house's age. The windows were all broken save an upper bedroom window, that appeared to have been tinted. As I cautiously made my way up the stairs, I was greeted with the saddest looking door that I had ever seen. There were no longer any locks on the door, because apparently somebody had pried and ripped the mechanism out, and the face of the door was covered with handprints, fist marks, kick marks, and all kinds of dents. When James pushed the door to enter the house, it let out such a pathetic, saddening groan which sounded like a very sick person right before he or she dies. And the smell that hit me as that door opened was the most revolting and nauseating smell that I had ever encountered. This smell was so foul that I would rather inhale fresh cow manure, chicken shit, and a truckload of dead skunks. I am not kidding man, I could not even begin to tell you what was in that smell. Still, if I backed out and went back to the dorm, then James might hold it against me, and I could not really afford to risk that. After taking a few deep breaths of the pure outside air, I stepped inside.

I did not know how it was possible, but the inside of the house was actually far worse than the outside. Furniture that was littered with week old garbage, stains of all sorts (puke, piss, and yes, even shit) were scattered on the carpet in what I guess was the living room. To be fair, the only reason I made that assumption was because, buried under a mound of dirty clothes, I could make out the faint image of a television. Anyway, James popped around the corner and told me to get my ass into the kitchen. I took one last glance at the horror show that was the living room and headed towards the kitchen.

Words cannot even begin to describe the state of the kitchen. Dirty dishes were piled to the ceiling, the sink was full of even more dirty clothes, cigarette butts littered the tattered and torn tiled floor; the smell was that of pure death. I have never wanted to get away from someplace so bad in my life. And now this is where things get a little hazy, because I don't quite remember all of what happened. What I do remember is that when I was about to turn and leave, I was grabbed by two very large individuals. They picked me up off the ground and turned me upside down and brought me over to a keg. That's when James came over and said, "Alright fucker, time for your initiation." Then he held up something to my mouth and told me that he wanted me to drink. I told him that I did not want to drink as I was getting rather dizzy and light headed. He smiled and told me, "Well, you can choose not to drink, but the sooner you do, the sooner your ass will be right side up." When I saw that he was dead serious on this matter, I grabbed the drinking device out of James' hand and began to drink. I don't remember how long I drank, but I do remember that a lot of people were screaming, yelling, and encouraging me to keep going. By the time that I was put back on my feet my head was spinning out of control, and James was laughing, saying, "You little son of a bitch. You beat my record. Hell, you beat everybody's record. Let me get you a beer buddy." Honestly, I felt sick to my stomach from dizziness, so more alcohol did not really seem like a good idea, but James insisted, so I took it.

Man, let me tell you that after a few more beers, I was having the best night of my fucking life. And you know what, I realized why the house was so awesome for partying: you could break shit and make a mess and nobody got upset about it. The real

fucking hilarious part is that the house actually turned out to be abandoned, the city had just forgot to demolish it. How cool is that? Anyway, I ended up meeting a lot of real awesome people there. I can't tell you their names, but trust me they were cool as shit. About the only bad part that night was that I had to wait for James to finish having sex with some girl before we could go home. But other than that, man it was amazing. I cannot wait to go back again.

Now, I think it is pretty obvious why I added the little disclaimer at the beginning of the letter. Rest assured I was in complete control last night, even if I cannot remember all of it. And yes, I did ask James about what would have happened if I had refused to drink from the keg. He put his hand on my shoulder and with true sincerity told me, "I would have told them to put you down. I wanted you to have fun. I will never make you do anything you don't want to do. I just said what I said because I knew that you would have more fun if you did." And you know what? He was right. I had a fucking blast. Well, I got to go right now man, looks like I'm heading out again. Until next time, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

May 6th, 2013

Dear Peter,

To be completely honest man, this is the last thing that I want to be doing right now. I would much rather still be in bed, sleeping in. But I made a promise, and I suppose that I need to keep it. Not like it would really matter if you didn't get one of these stupid fucking letters from me once in a while. I'm sorry man, I didn't mean that. I know that you told me in the past that these letters are sometimes the only thing that gets you through your day. It's just that my head is literally pounding out of my skull right now, my stomach feels like I'm going to spew, and I am so lightheaded, that I think I might need to pull my head down from the ceiling and re-attach it to my shoulders. Still, it was a hell of a party last night. Well, to be fair, I can't say for sure what I did last night...I can't remember most of it. But like James is always telling me, "If you can't remember and your memory is hazy, then man, last night was CRAZY." So, I am just going to assume that things got wild last night. Oh, there is one thing from last night that I do want to tell you about.

Last night, after I was a few drinks deep, I bumped into Greg. You remember Greg right? My first roommate who played that horrible prank on me the first day of class. Well, turns out, he's not such a bad guy after all. He greeted me when I bumped into him, told me that, "he was glad to finally see me coming out of my fucking shell." He introduced me to everybody at the party, and later on, he and I talked outside on the porch. We mostly talked about funny videos we had seen on the internet and what movies we were excited to see. Oh, that's right, I forgot to tell you, I actually switched

my major. I decided to go ahead and take the Dean up on his offer to become a New Media Studies student. I know that I said that I didn't see their place in academics, but you know, after talking with James for extensive periods of time, I actually began to see that they might be worth studying. So, anyway, Greg and I seem to enjoy the same kind of movies. In fact, James and I are heading over to his place later for a movie party, which Greg assured me is going to be, "fucking unreal." Oh man, my head feels like it is going to split apart. I have to go and get some 'drink-away' pills. I'll be right back, man.

-----

Okay, now I feel much better. Seriously, those pills are the shit. It doesn't matter how bad of shape I'm in after drinking, I just pop two of those pills, and I'm good to go for the rest of the day. And I'll tell you something else that is the shit: 'correct all'. Yeah, it is this feature on the 'type-it' program that I'm using. What it does, is it scans through the entire document, looking for errors of any kind, even the ones that are not highlighted by the red and green squiggles. Then, when it is finished scanning, it pops up a message box telling you how many errors it found in your document. Finally, it gives you two choices. You can either manually look through all of the errors and choose which ones to correct, or you can have the program automatically correct every error it found. I'll admit that I'm not proud that I've used this program mainly because I've been drunk or hungover...but hey, it works. No professor has ever had a problem with any of my papers yet. And man, does it save time. It used to take me over an hour to manually correct every little error, but now 'correct all' does it in like twenty



seconds. So now I can use that extra time that I would have been wasting to correct my papers and do something else. I can use that time to go to the movies with James, or look up the newest viral video on the internet or even go to the bars and try to pick up chicks. Most of the time though, I just surf the internet, have a few drinks with James, and then go to bed. I've been told by some of the nerdy students that this routine is not healthy. But at the end of the day, they're just jealous, because I am having the time of my life, and still acing my classes. Whereas they have to make a choice: study or have fun. When I first came here, I used to have to make that choice, but I'm glad that I don't have to any longer.

Well, I got to go man. James is tapping at his watch, so I should start getting ready for Greg's party. Sorry about the rant earlier in the letter, I was just in a grouchy mood. As always, take care of yourself, man.

Later,

Daniel

May 10th, 2013

Dear Peter,

Hey, you seemed a little confused in your last letter, so I wanted to clarify a few things. The first is that 'the shit' is not meant to be taken in a literal context. It's slang for saying something is really great. The second point that I wanted to clarify is that, although I respect and appreciate your concern, you don't need to worry man. Trust me, I'm fine. Like I said in the last letter, I'm still acing my classes. In fact, I have the

highest G.P.A. in the program. As long as my partying doesn't interfere with my schooling, then why shouldn't I indulge myself? Okay, now that I have clarified those two points, I wanted to tell you about a couple of things that happened recently. Some of it is great, but some of it is a little strange.

The great thing that happened is that the President announced a couple days ago, that, due to insufficient student enrollment, certain majors were also going to be released. So far, Science, Math, Engineering, Theatre, Psychology, Philosophy, History, and Ethnic Studies have all been removed from the university. The President provided a heartfelt apology to all of the professors who were going to be laid off as a result of this decision. He once again extended the offer for those professors to switch over to the New Media Studies program. But unlike last time, every single professor walked out, refusing the President's offer. Most of them walked away peacefully, but some did have to be restrained, while others told the President that he was "disgusting," or that "he needed to get his head screwed back onto his shoulders if he thought this was a good idea." However, as with last time, the President remained steadfast in his decision. Okay, so are you ready for the great news? Because the university now has so many empty classrooms, the President announced that one of the wings of the school is going to be demolished, and in its place, a movie theater is going to be constructed. That's right, we will officially have a movie theater in the university. Do you know how awesome that is? Man, right now, James and I have to walk five miles, get on a bus, and then it is still another twenty minutes before we get to the theater. But now, we will be able to walk less than one mile in order to go see a movie. And the best news is that this

construction will only take a matter of months, so it will be completed before my junior year. Man, next year is going to be great.

Moving on to the weird thing that happened recently. My father sent me a letter, telling me that, apparently people had begun selling their farmland to investors. He told me that these investors are offering incredible amounts of money in order to turn the farmland into movie theater complexes and grocery store megaplexes. My father told me that he was disgusted with everybody's decision to give up their heritage and let it be desecrated, just for a few bucks. But, on the other hand, he told me that he realized that it wasn't just a few bucks, it was millions of bucks. He admitted to me that he did talk with my mother about possibly selling the farm, simply because the offer was not only incredible, but one hundred percent legitimate. These were not some small-bit, sleazy scam artists, these were multi-million dollar investors who represented multi-billion dollar companies. Also...remember how I told you that my father had brought automated helpers onto the farm? Well, apparently, he has brought in a great deal more of them. I have written him back, inquiring as to why he has done this.

Well, I got to go right now though man...have to get ready for another party at Greg's tonight. As always, take care of yourself man.

Later,

Daniel

May 15th, 2013

Dear Peter,

I don't have a great deal of time to write today, as I have several parties to attend throughout the day. However, I did say that I would tell you my father's response as to why he had hired more automated help for the farm, as soon as I received his response.

Well, I have received his response, and I must say that it is a little bit odd.

*Daniel,*

*Hey, I just received your letter voicing your concern about me getting more of them automated helpers here on the farm. Look, I wanted to let you know that you've got nothing to worry about. Fact is that I'm getting older Daniel and my body sometimes doesn't respond the way I'd like it to now and again. Normally, this isn't that big of a deal, but recently my body has been hating me more and more. Some days I come home from taking care of my duties and I can barely lift my arms or there are days when I'll come back hunched over because my back all but gave out on me. It just seems like nowadays mother nature is trying to let me know that I'm not as strong or as tough as I was when I was your age Daniel. And you know what, rather than get all down about this fact, I decided to listen to mother nature. After all, those little automated bastards have been a tremendous help so far, and I figured that I might as well just start abusing the fuck out of them. And why shouldn't I? They never get tired; their strength will never fade; they will never get older. So, if using more of them is what I've got to do to keep this farm up and running, then dammit, I'm going to do it. But rest assured Daniel, your father has not lost his way. I'm just going to take it easy for a little while. And then*

*when I'm feeling better, I'll kick the extra help back to the manufacturer. Remember this is me we're talking about. You got no reason to worry, but I do appreciate your concern. Take care of yourself Daniel; hope this letter helped put your mind at ease.*

*Always with love,*

*Dad*

Doesn't that sound a little odd to you? This is my father we're talking about here. This is a man who physically lifted a tractor off the ground so that he could punish me for doing something bad when I was a kid. This is the man who carries two hundred pound bundles of hay, one in each hand, and throws them with ease into the rafters of the barn. This is the man who singlehandedly held the barn doors shut during the Great Windstorm, so that the animals didn't escape. And yet this same man, my father, is telling me that he is having back and arm problems. I know he is not as young as he used to be, and I am aware that muscle mass deteriorates over time, but he has always been in great shape. He is a farmer, after all; exercise and getting a workout sort of comes with the territory. Still, I suppose accidents do happen. Perhaps I'm just reading too much into this. He probably over-exerted himself and strained something. Yeah, come to think of it, that would make perfect sense. And hey, if it will increase his productivity while he is recuperating, than why shouldn't he hire more automated help? Besides, he already assured me that once he is better than he'll get rid of the extra help. You know it's funny, because I was really worried before writing to you, but now that I think about it, I was simply over reacting.

Now, I know that you once again expressed concern because I'm partying a lot. Well, once again I'll tell you that everything is fine. Seriously, I know that you are in a place where the slightest change in a person is a sign that there will be trouble over the horizon, but you need to realize that I'm in college; people find themselves here, and yes, that does mean they change. Admittedly yes, some do change for the bad. Others like me, are just having a little fun before they have to immerse themselves entirely in the real world. Trust me, I am doing fine. As a matter of fact...

Listen, something's up. I got to run.

Later,

Daniel

## Patholopolis

May 16th, 2013

Dear Peter,

Sorry for having to cut the last letter short. Long story short...Professor Stire killed himself. Not only that, but the reason the police came looking for me was because Professor Stire wrote that he wished his suicide note to be delivered to me. Now why in the fucking hell would somebody do that man? Here I was having the best time of my life, and now this shitstorm drops on my plate, wrecking my life. I tried to refuse the letter, but the police officers made me take it and read it to them, just in case there were some clues that pointed to something other than suicide. I couldn't explain it, but tears were welling up in my eyes while I read it. Afterwards, the police seemed satisfied that it was a standard case of depression related suicide. They told me that I could keep the note and do with it what I wished, and then they left. I must have stood there for what seemed like hours, holding this damned note, not knowing what the hell to make of it. Why would Professor Stire do this to me? I was the only student that ever stood up for him, and this is how he chose to repay my kindness. Maybe my first impression of him was correct after all. Maybe he was just a cruel and sadistic bastard. I scolded myself for thinking this way though, and then I noticed that my cheek was wet.

Later on that night, Greg gave me a call, wondering why I wasn't at his house for the party. Oh, yeah, I should mention that I now have a cell phone. It was a requirement for this class that I'm taking now. We're supposed to learn how to communicate with each other in the new technological age, and the professor thought it

was a good idea to start with learning how to use cell phones. It didn't cost me a dime, there was more than enough money in the university's budget to pay for all enrolled students to get a phone. Admittedly, texting is taking me a great deal of time to master. But anyway, Greg called me and wondered where I was. I told him what had happened. There was an incredibly lengthy pause and then Greg said, "Professor Stire? That fucking hard-ass teacher that everybody hated because he failed every student who took his classes? That fucker?" I tried to defend Professor Stire, saying that he wasn't that bad of a person or a teacher, he was just a little misunderstood. I said that he was one of the first people to befriend me at the university, so in a way, I did feel that I had just lost a friend. Greg scoffed at this, he said, "Friend? How the fuck was that piece of shit your friend? Did he ever invite you to hang out? Did you ever go out to the bars with him? Was he ever there to help you get laid? Did he ever provide you a place to crash when you were too drunk to walk? Huh? Did he ever do any of that shit?" I told Greg that no, he had never done any of that, but that he- - Greg cut me off before I could say anymore and said, "Exactly! He never did any of those things because he wasn't your fucking friend. All he was, in a nutshell, was a hard-ass professor, who treated his students like shit because he had a fucking God complex. That's it man! James and I are your fucking friends."

It was hard to argue this point that Greg was making. After all, I remember all the sleepless nights, the headaches, the stress breakdowns that I experienced in order to get a good grade in Professor Stire's classes. True, this got easier after I figured his class out, but I still had to bust my ass all the fucking time. Whereas now, I feel better



each day, both emotionally and physically. And then Greg said something that really opened my eyes. He said, “Hey, as one final piece of proof that he was never your friend. What does a friend do above all else? He is always there for you, no matter what. Well, how the fuck can he be there for you if he killed himself? The answer is he can’t. This douchebag didn’t care if he was there for you, and that’s why he’s gone. He was a selfish cunt. But do you know who will always be there for you? James and I. Your true fucking friends.” I smiled at this statement. And you know what, I realized Greg was right. So fuck Professor Stire. I asked Greg if he would crack a cold one for me, because I was on my way over. He laughed and said, “Like you even needed to ask.”

So, yeah, some crazy shit right? Listen, I got to go right now; heading over to Greg’s. But before I go I wanted to ask a favor of you. I have attached Professor Stire’s suicide note to this letter. Can you dispose of it for me. For whatever reason, even though I don’t care, I can’t seem to bring myself to get rid of it. So, can you just do that for me man? Until next time, as always, take care of yourself man.

later,

Daniel

To all of my friends,

I am writing this in hopes that there are still those of you out there who can comprehend and appreciate what I have to say. There is no hope for me anymore, but maybe there is still a chance for you. So please listen to my story and heed my warning.

Last week, my best friend, Derek, flew in for our annual visit. Considering the recent events of losing my job, I was greatly looking forward to his company. No matter how bad things get in my life, Derek has always been there for me; I knew this time would be no different. After embracing in the airport, we walked to my car, loaded his luggage into the trunk, and set off.

When we arrived at my house, something seemed different about Derek. He was unusually quiet. In fact, he had been rather quiet on the road as well. I knew something was up, so I decided to ask him what was wrong. He told me that he was just tired from the flight. I told him that I knew him well enough to know that something was bothering him besides being a little tired from the flight. I reminded him that he could tell me anything and that I wanted to help in any way I could. There was an incredibly long pause, and then Derek walked over to the couch, sat down, and stared at the floor.

"Maria left me Spence. She took the kids."

"What?!"

"Yeah, I came home last week and she had all the bags packed and the kids were nowhere in sight. So I asked her what the fuck was going on. She told me that she was tired of being with somebody that was stuck in the past. She said that the kids deserved somebody who was more modern; somebody who could give the kids a better chance in life. I tried to get her to explain, but she just handed me the divorce papers and walked out the door." I knew that I should say something. I wanted to tell him to call Maria and beg for her to reconsider. To call his lawyer and see if there was any way that he could get this issue resolved. But I said none of those things. When I opened my mouth, the words that came out were, "Well, she kind of has a point. I mean, like they say, 'you gotta get with it or you will miss it.'"

*When I woke up, I was lying on the floor, my jaw hurt and my vision was blurry. Derek was nowhere to be found. That is when I realized that I was lost, corrupted. In my best friend's time of need, all I could provide him with was a lousy catchphrase.*

*Please, if there is still anybody out there whose mind remains pure; guard it with your life. And for those who think it is too hard, just remember, "Whether shrouded in darkness or bathed in light, the answer will always lie within you." Goodbye.*

*. -- Spence Skire --*

July 4th, 2013

Dear Peter,

Okay, remember that funny video that I described to you in the past? Well, forget about that piece of crap, because I have found something that is so much more hilarious than a kid riding his bike into a wall: Beggar Brawls.

Now, I know that you don't have access to see this, but I'm going to do my best to describe it to you. Basically, there are these groups of kids that go around and look for beggars. But it can't just be any beggar who holds up a sign and wants attention. No, the beggars that these kids choose are handpicked because each beggar possesses certain qualities that they are looking for. Generally speaking, they tend to pick the beggars that truly appear to be starving and who look like they have nothing left to live for.

Anyways, after the kids find the beggars, they tell them that they will give them free food if they are willing to follow them. These beggars are starving so of course they are going to follow. This is where shit gets interesting man. Once they have walked the beggars to secure location (trainyard, abandoned house, etc.), one of the kids sets up a tripod, the other kids all pull out gigantic, wrapped sandwiches. The beggars move

towards the sandwiches, but the leader of the group pushes them back and tells them that they have to fight for the sandwiches. The beggars looked puzzled, so the leader informs them that if they don't fight each other, then they will simply take the free food and leave. The beggars look very scared, because they don't want to miss out on such an opportunity to eat, so they begin to plead for the food. The leader spits in their faces and calls them pathetic and tells the beggars that they blew their chance. As the kids begin to pack up the food and start to head out, you realize that they have forgotten their tripod. And this is where the hilarity ensues.

One beggar will usually get pissed at the other beggar for fucking up their chances, and the other beggar will get angry for being yelled at. This back and forth arguing continues for a few minutes until one of the beggars snaps and charges the other one. Now, I have seen so many of these damn videos because they are awesome, but generally what happens is that one beggar gets tackled and then gets the ever-living shit kicked out of him. And these beggars are brutal man. I've seen videos where beggars have had their teeth busted out, lungs punctured, ribs shattered, jaws broken, etc. Hell, there is even a video, that unfortunately had to be taken down, that had one beggar impaling another beggar with a broken pipe. Long story short though, one of the beggars is beaten senseless, blood pooling around his head. This is when the kids come back in, clapping and showing their appreciation for what the beggar has done. The beggar becomes excited because he thinks that they are going to give him the sandwiches. However, instead of pulling out sandwiches, the kids pull out bats and beat the victorious beggar senseless. The end of every Beggar Brawls video shows the leader taking a giant

bite out of a sandwich and tossing it on the floor beside the beggar they just beat the shit out of.

Seriously, you have got to see it to believe it, but I'm telling you that this shit is fucking hilarious. These kids are geniuses. And these beggars are so fucking stupid, I mean how can you not laugh at people willing to beat the crap out of each other for a fucking sandwich? I know I can't stop myself from laughing. Hell, James, Greg and me have been watching that shit for most of the summer. I personally cannot wait for the next season.

I got to go right now though...parties to attend. You understand right?

later

Daniel

September 20th, 2013

Dear Peter,

I'll give you a quick recap of what's been going on recently. Basically, I've started my sophomore year here at the university, and things couldn't be going better. I'm like one of the most popular kids at the university. Greg, James, and I rented out a place off campus, and we've been having more fun than ever before. Seriously, we party almost every fucking night. It's truly awesome man. Oh, and the movie theater is officially up and running here, and Greg, James, and I have been abusing the shit out of that place. God, I have seen so many great movies over the past couple of months. And since I know that you're unable to watch movies where you are, I thought it might

be nice for you to hear about them in great detail. I'll try to be as detailed as possible, so that you can have the full experience. Apologies for any spoilers if you ever get a chance to watch them on your own, but that probably shouldn't be a problem due to your circumstances. So, let's begin.

Okay, first of all, I will admit that I can't remember any of the movie titles. We were quite drunk when we saw these movies, you know, pre-gaming like crazy before heading out. But the title doesn't really matter now does it? So, moving on, the first movie I want to tell you about was insane. The movie starts off with a bunch of guys in a diner, and they are arguing about what this one song actually meant. Some of them think the song is about a woman losing her virginity, whereas others think it is a love song about how this one guy makes her feel like she is still a virgin, you know spiritually. The funny thing about this argument is that all of these guys are real tough guys, decked out in full suit attire. Anyway, so they argue for a bit, and then the check comes. Now, this is where the movie gets a little funny. All of the guys throw in like ten or even twenty bucks for a tip, except for one guy. Everybody who throws in a tip bitches at this guy, demanding that he tip the fucking waitress because being a waitress is a hard job. The guy refuses though, saying that, on principle, he sees no need to do such a thing. The guys try to convince him, but he still refuses. Then the boss comes to collect all of the money and he notices that this guy hasn't put in his money. He demands to know why this is the case, and once again the guy states that, on principle, he doesn't see the need. The boss tells him that he doesn't care what he thinks, he was going to tip the goddamn waitress. After all he tells him, "I bought you your damn food. So pony up."

The guy reluctantly reaches into his wallet and tosses in a few bucks for a tip. The boss tells him, "Thank you. Now get the fuck out of my sight." Man, I loled so hard at that. Oh, sorry, lol means 'laugh out loud'. I'm trying to get used to some of the features and slang of text talk for that class of mine, so I figured I'd start incorporating it into my letters. Hope that it okay with you. But anyway, yeah, so the guys leave and...well to be honest I don't remember a great deal after that, because I think I passed out and blacked out for a bit. Greg did wake me up during the best part though. Okay, so this guy has a police officer tied to a chair in the middle of a warehouse. Now, this guy's dancing and having a good ol' time, meanwhile the officer is terrified. And then do you know what happens? The guy cuts the cop's ear clean off his head! I literally stood up in the theater and screamed, "No fucking way! That's awesome!" And then I passed out again. I guess standing up that quickly must have caused me to get really lightheaded. I didn't wake up again until the ending of the movie. And what an ending it was. It was epic to say the least. This guy is holding some other guy, who is absolutely covered in blood, and then he shoots him in the head. Then the cops open fire and kill the other guy. And that's it. The credits roll as soon as the police shoot the other guy. Isn't that insane? Seriously, I was blown away from that movie. Well, at least the parts that I recall, lol.

Now this next movie was trippy as fuck. Seriously, this movie bent and twisted my mind like a pile of jello. It's this movie about a group of seriously fucked up teenagers, and they seriously do whatever the hell they want to whomever they want. The beginning of the movie shows them assaulting some old guy in a dark alley. The

fucked up part though is that the bum wasn't doing anything to them, he was just trying to sleep. It's unclear whether or not they kill the bum, but they certainly wailed on him. Then this group of teenagers head over to what looks like an abandoned theatre. At the theatre, some rival group of teenagers are in the process of trying to rape some girl on stage. They fight, they cut each other up, and the group of teenagers, who I guess were the main characters, end up leaving the other group of teenagers a bleeding mess. Then the leader of the group goes home and masturbates to Beethoven. Oh yeah, I'm dead serious. And while he's doing this, the screen kept popping up all these random images, flashing them so fast that it actually gave me a headache. Greg turned to me and asked me "Dude, wtf is going on?" Wtf, by the way means 'what the fuck'. I told him that I didn't have any clue what was going on. And this confusion continued as the movie got even more bizarre. The next scene is the group of teenagers, beating up a crippled old man while taking turns gang-raping his wife. What's fucked up about this scene is that all of the teenagers are wearing Pinnochio masks, and the leader is singing the whole fucking time. Then the next scene has the leader killing a woman by beating her to death with a gigantic sculpture of a penis. I'm not joking man, because I couldn't make this shit up if I tried. I don't know if it was the flashy images, or the amount of booze that I had drank before coming to the theater, but mercifully I had to excuse myself to go throw up for a bit. When I came back, the movie was winding down. I asked Greg if the movie had gotten any better. He told me, "Dude. this movie makes no fucking sense. But it's like a train wreck. I just have to keep watching." I decided that I didn't want my stomach and head to hurt anymore, so I just stared at the floor for the remainder of



the movie. I'll tell you man, if you can get through this movie and tell me what it's about, I would pay you one hundred dollars. Seriously, I have never been so confused in my whole fucking life. But it is still something that everybody should see, if nothing else, just to have their minds melted.

So, yeah, that's what's been going on with me recently. Do you know what the best part of all of this is? I'm pretty sure the staff know most of us go to these movies drunk off our asses, but they don't seem to care. So, I get to hang out with my friends and watch movies while being drunk off my ass, with no repercussions. It's win mother fucking win man. As long as I have a steady supply of 'drink-away' pills, I'll always be good to go the next day, so I see no reason to stop doing what I'm doing.

Hey, I just realized that I said that I was going to give you a detailed description of the movies, and I really didn't. Well, I'm sorry that I didn't do that, but seriously, like I said, it's not like you're ever going to see these movies. So, hey, do with them what you will. Oh, one more thing before I forget. My father wrote me a letter telling me that he has officially sold the farm. He did ask me if I wanted to come and say a final goodbye, but I wrote him that I couldn't. I mean I could but we're having a huge party at our house on that day; there's no way I'm missing that. And speaking of which, I got to go, it's almost time to start getting ready for our daily house party. I've attached my father's letter to this if you want to read it, but it really isn't very fucking interesting. Until then, as always, take care of yourself man.

later

Daniel

Daniel,

Hey, look I know you're busy and all, but I just wanted to let you know that...well...your mother and I have decided to sell the farm. This decision was a pretty difficult one for your mother and myself to make. But in the end, it seemed like it would be for the best. I mean those movie moguls were offering us millions of dollars to sell the damned thing. Did you hear that? MILLIONS of dollars simply to move and let them turn the farmland into one of their multiplex theaters. I love my heritage and you know that I would fight to the death to defend it, but dammit that was just too much fucking money to pass up. So, it looks like your mom and I are going to be able to treat ourselves to an early retirement. I don't have a clue where we are going to move to, but with the amount of money that we received, our options are pretty much wide open. Anyway, I wanted to write this letter to tell you that the house and the farm will be gone within a week, so if you wanted to come down and say one last final goodbye, then you might want to think about doing that. Judging by your lack of visits in the recent past, I don't think that will be an option in your mind, but in case it is, you could maybe swing down next week Friday. A word of warning if you do though: those automated bastards have almost made the place unrecognizable. On the plus side, that did make the decision to sell a little bit easier, so I guess I should thank them for that. Well, that's it Daniel. I don't know where your mother and I will end up, but I'll be sure to let you know as soon as I can. One last thing...if not for the farm...come visit for my sake...I miss you.

Always with love,

Dad

November 20th, 2013

Dear Peter,

I've been incredibly busy having the fucking time of my life as usual. Seriously you have no idea what you're missing out on and I really do wish that you could be here to enjoy it with me because i know that you'd have a blast. I've told Greg and James about you and they say that you sound like a real cool guy and that they would love to meet you someday. Oh, speaking of Greg seriously the man is a fucking genius with the ladies he just has some special way of talking with them that gets them all hot and bothered. And he is such an awesome guy that he hooked me up with at least a dozen girls already and let me tell you that these girls have been pretty incredible to be with well except for the one girl that tried to bite my neck but hey you can't win them all right? For the most part though I've been having the greatest sex life and i all it all to Greg. Oh yeah we are no longer living with James anymore because that fucker did something that was completely unforgivable he totally knew that that girl was being groomed for me and he still swooped in and snatched her from me. Oh and get this they are actually dating yeah if you can believe that shit. He came up to us the next day and told us that he thought we were getting a little out of control what with the daily partying and the constant pill popping. That's another thing that i have to tell you about dude these pills i don't know what the hell they're called but Greg has a steady supply of them and they really just make you feel good all of the time. Sometimes when i am really drunk and feeling down i'll pop a couple of those bad boys and instantly i feel like a new man. But not only did James have a problem with the drinking and the pill popping he thought that

the way we were treating women was deplorable and that all we did anymore was drink  
 pop pills surf the net and have sex. He said that we weren't even bothering to go to  
 class anymore and that he thought we were going to get expelled if we didn't do  
 something about it. So what if my gpa dropped a little bit it's just like Greg says, "what  
 the fuck did a gpa ever do for you? did it ever make you happy or get you laid? no,  
 then fuck it. who cares." Truer words were never spoken man i'll tell you this guy is a  
 fucking genius. So yeah anyway we kicked James right the fuck out of the house and  
 sent him packing and things have been awesome now that we don't have to deal with his  
 nagging ass anymore. He still tries to contact me on my phone but i just ignore his calls  
 and delete his texts. Speaking of texts dude it is amazing you save so much fucking  
 time and the best part is that you don't have to worry about grammar and all that  
 unnecessary bullshit because who cares. I would tell you about this awesome video that  
 Greg showed me but there really is no fucking point anymore is there. Fact is that you  
 will never be able to understand what i'm talking about and frankly i'm going to stop  
 trying. Also man this is the last letter that you're going to get from me in this style  
 because i'm getting sick of how long this shit takes to do and i'd rather be doing  
 soemthing else. Fucking squiggle i don't give a dshit anymore if the fucking word isd  
 spelled wrong. But don't get your panties all in a bunch i'm still going to write you  
 letters it's just that they are ogoing to be ing a little different nect time so that i doin't  
 hjaive to worry about theis shoit anymore. If for anhy reqason you do n't knwo bhow to  
 speak text dpeakl then is suggest that youy find somebody who is famiuliar withh it  
 becayuse that is the only way that i'm goiung to be communicating form npow on okahyt.

Because it is npothoing on you but personally i'm getting really tired of hav ing to fucking make sure thast i've pselled weverything corectrlhy. And honestroly i'm so far past catoing about anyt of thiat shit.

Until next tyimer, as alwasys, take a cate of yours lrgf mnan.

latedre,

Da neil

March 14th, 2014

hey peter

ok man this is so much better. let me tell u about what happend 2day. greg and i were talkin about this movie that we saw the other night when fucking james came knockin on our door. man to say we were pissed would b an understatement because we were srsly fcking mad. i mean this is the guy who stole my gurl away from me and the same guy who had the nerve to suggest to us that greg and i might have a bit of a problem. but we had ben friends b4 and i figured that we should hear him out and lisen to w/e he had 2 say. james was there 2 try and make peace with greg and i. now I didnt know if he was trying 2 do this cause he needed a place to crash and no1 would take him in or if he was srsly being genuine. so greg and me walked out onto the porch to see what was up. james started off by sayin that he was sriry 4 what he had said in the past. he said that he overreacted cause he was havin a lot of shit goin down in his life and he took it out on his friends. he said that we didnt deserve what he had said and that he wanted to kno if we could 4give him & put this whole mess behind us. greg asked him if he was even

apologizing about the pill shit that he slung at both of us. james said that he still believed that we should take it a little easy with the pills, that he wasn't goin to interfere with it anymore, provided that it didn't hurt nobody else. greg seemed 2 be happy with this. so then it was my turn. i only had 1 question, and that was 2 kno if he was willin 2 apologize 4 stealin the gurl who greg was groomin for me right out from under my nose. james shut up 4 a bit before answering but he eventually did say that it was wrong of him 2 take somebody out from under my nose. he said that it was a shitty thing to do, but he did tell me that she and he had been goin steady 4 quite some time now and were even talking about getting married, so he wondered if he could have my blessin on the matter. and u know what as pissed as i was then i had been with severl grls since then and so i had no problem giving him my blessin 4 his relationship. after all this guy was a good friend of mine. james asked 1 more time if he could move back in and start again. he said that he brought a couple of cases and wanted to know if everything was cool. greg laughed and said "like you even had to ask." and then we all laughed cracked open a couple of cool ones and got shitty wasted.

which brings us 2 this current moment. im currently writing this letter 2 u inbetween pong games. and then after that were all going to go see a movie. the three musketeers ride again. and you know what im glad. because life just wasn't the same w/o james. After all he's the one that usually buys the beer lmao.

anywho I gotta run right now as greg is pounding on the bthroom door screaming at me that were up. so im going to go whoop some newbies ass at pong and then im goin to go see a movie with my friends and then who knos where the night will take me.

oh u did ask about my father a couple of letters ago. well i dont kno much about that shit and frankly i dont care 2 much about it. all he told me was that he couldnt refuse the offer and that he thought he had earned himself a permanent vacation from hard work. and who the fuck am i to question his decision?

i apologize if that got a little nasty there but seriously man its my father and its my life. and u know im just tryin to do everything in my power 2 make sure that i “get with it so that i dont miss it.” and you know... actually... you know what? fuck u man. fuck ur criticisms. fuck ur bitching. and fuck these stupid letters. im out.

bye

daniel

## Necropolis

April 3rd, 2014

Dear Daniel,

Okay, what the hell has gotten into you lately? Seriously, I have not been able to make any sense out of the last couple of letters that you have sent me. Now, I know that you have been having a lot of fun recently, and that is great man, seriously I am thrilled for you. But what has been up with you? Drinking is one thing man, but popping pills and treating women like they are some kind of commodity. That does not sound like the Daniel that I went to prison for. And oh yeah, I received your last letter. Fuck me? Are you serious? Man, if it were not for me, you would not even be at that stupid university or have you forgotten that too? Seriously man, you do not even seem like the same person anymore. All you seem to talk about is movies and partying. Like I said, there is nothing wrong with either of those things, but what happened to the Daniel who used to bore the crap out of me explaining the plot in some extremely complicated novel that I had never heard of? And what do you mean that you do not care that your father sold the fucking farm? The Daniel that I knew would have run home if his car broke down to see what was going on. But I guess that Daniel is dead and gone; he's been replaced by this incoherent, rambling, drunk, drugged-up lunatic. I actually got out on parole two days ago, and I was going to surprise you, but that is not going to happen anymore. Sorry it has to end this way, but



I have to draw the line somewhere man. And **you** are that somewhere. Try to take care of yourself. By the way, I have attached something... something that you have apparently forgotten.

bye,

Peter

*August 3rd, 2008*

*Dear Peter,*

*I still cannot believe it. I mean, words have no means of expressing what I am feeling at this very moment. One moment, we were having a great time, and the next minute, I was surrounded by a flurry of flashing colors, each one taking turns penetrating my eyes, burrowing into my skull, and the strangest combination of sounds that created an unholy orchestra of maelstrom that my already ringing ears were forced to endure. The next thing I know, there are strange voices pulsating through the noise, asking me if, "I am okay." My brain processed the question, but it refused to answer back. And then the voices emerged through the colors, and transformed into figures and shapes. These figures then started pulling at me, insisting that I should go with them. I remember panicking, not wanting to be taken, I swung at these dark figures sending them reeling away. That is when I decided to run away. The relentlessness of the colors and the orchestra were too much for me to handle, I knew I needed to get away. I ran for a few minutes until I ran into something and fell down.*

*I remember looking up and seeing that the source of my fall was a large, bulky object. Upon closer examination, the object did seem to have a certain familiarity about it. My brain immediately processed the image: my car. And yet, it was not my car. When I had last seen my car, it did not look anything like the twisted and mangled heap that I was looking at. But everything about this heap screamed out to me that it was my car. I could hear some voices shouting in the distance, echoing inside my head. I could not make out what they were saying, all I knew was that I needed to get away. But when I tried to run, I discovered that my feet would not cooperate, acting as if they were cemented into their current position. In a matter of seconds, my entire body followed suit and my eyes became focused on one particular spot. I wanted to scream, but my mouth would not open. The blood from the bodies streamed down their faces like sand in an hourglass.*

*They were motionless. Their emotionless eyes staring back at me. By the time the figures behind the voices came and grabbed me, I had fallen to the ground and was shaking and shivering violently.*

*I was informed the next morning at the hospital what had happened. Why Peter? Why would you do such a foolish thing? I do not deserve the mercy that you have allowed me. I should be in prison and you should be here at home. I will never be able to repay you for this most selfless act, nor will I ever forget the life that you have sacrificed in order for me to still have mine. I do not know when I will ever be ready, but when the time comes, you can rest assured that I will honor my promise. I will get out of this town and live my life the way that I want to live it. I am going to go to college and make something out of myself. And I will write to you every single chance that I get, from now, until you get out, because that is the least that I can do for everything that you have done for me. Until then, please, take care of yourself, man.*

*Later,*

*Daniel*

## Bibliography

Altman, Janet Gurkin. *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press. 1982. Print.

Bausch, Richard. "Letter to the Lady of the House". *The Selected Stories of Richard Bausch*. New York: Random House, Inc. 1996. 167-180. Print.

Bierce, Ambrose. "Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General". *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Ed. James Moffett & Kenneth R. McElheny. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc. 1995. 126-136. Print.

Brown, Rosellen. "Inter-Office". *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Ed. James Moffett & Kenneth R. McElheny. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc. 1995. 56-62. Print.

Burroway, Janet, Stuckey-French, Elizabeth, & Stuckey-French, Ned. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, Eighth Edition*. Boston: Longman. 2011. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York: Buccaneer Books. 1932. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Collected Essays*. London: Chatto and Windus, Ltd. 1960. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization*. New York: Greenwood Press. 1969. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Literature and Science*. New York: Harper & Row. 1963. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Music at Night and Other Essays*. New York: Doubleday Doran & Company, Inc. 1930. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *On Art and Artists*. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1960. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper & Row. 1945. Print.

James, Henry. "A Bundle of Letters". *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Ed. James Moffett & Kenneth R. McElheny. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc. 1995. 62-96. Print.

*Letters of Aldous Huxley*. Ed. Grover Smith. New York: Harper & Row. 1970. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *Art and Technics*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1952. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *City Development: Studies in Disintegration and Renewal*. London:

Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd. 1947. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *My Works and Days*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

1929. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *Technics and Civilization*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

1934. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

1961. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *The Human Prospect*. London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd. 1956.

Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*. New

York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1966. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power*. New York:

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1970. Print.

Mumford, Lewis. *Values for Survival: Essays, Addresses, and Letters on Politics and Education*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1946. Print.

Munro, Alice. "A Wilderness Station". *Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Ed. James Moffett & Kenneth R. McElheny. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc. 1995. 96-126. Print.

Nguyen, Minh B & Shreve, Porter. *The Contemporary American Short Story*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc. 2004. Print.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Viking Penguin, Ltd. 1985. Print.

Postman, Neil. *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology, and Education*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1988. Print.

Postman, Neil and Powers, Steven. *How To Watch TV News*. New York: Penguin Books. 1992. Print.

Postman, Neil et al. *Myths, Men and Beer: An analysis of beer commercials on broadcast television, 1987*. Falls Church, Va: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. 1987. Print.

Postman, Neil and Weingartner, Charles. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Delacorte Press. 1969. Print.

Postman, Neil. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1992. Print.

Singer, Godfrey Frank. *The Epistolary Novel: Its Origin, Development, Decline, and Residuary Influence*. New York: Russel & Russel, Inc. 1963. Print.