

A Promise to Future Generations

“I am out collecting berries and shall return this evening.”

-Christopher McCandless,

August (?), Healy AK
next to an abandoned bus

I: An Introduction

I promise you all
we will fix these damn problems
in the near future.

(saying that while we're messing up
everything again) I swear to God!

Such a jerk move. I can't believe this is the future we're leaving you.

A clown president?
What the hell were we thinking?
Probably ratings.

Rating each other became the new
way to express feelings of fear.

90's kids did it. Now, we teach kids this terrible tradition too.

Another 90's
era craze was Deforest-
ation Nation, those

images of gutted forests in
the southern side of the old world,

ravaged and ruined so we can have powerful machines and be an

Advanced Civilization. But,
how advanced would we act if we ripped—?

All our hearts scream when
the screen goes black, and our face
is reflected back.

We bang and beat and stamp our feet
waiting waiting fucking waiting for

the relentless beeping sound to fill up the endless awful silence.

2: *The Promise*

I was guilty of it in the past. But
I promise you, future generations:

I won't raise you on these curses
given to us all
by a wrathful God.

I will walk with you, hand in hand,
through the woozy glens
and ravaged forests.

I will name the trees, and the trees
will name you back. This
is what I give you:

Nature will not be the same after us.
But, I will make sure you see her

on her deathbed, so
she can at least hold your hand
in her withered and

wrinkled hand, the mask
and tubes and machinery
beeping around her
(a symphony)
as she looks you square
in the eye, as

the light
dies.

"But don't worry, bud,"
I say with tears in my eyes,
glancing up towards
the faint quiet moon. "The sun

rises when the morning comes.”

I say this though with
the last shred of hope I can
muster, gone,
defeated.

3: A Promise made at Night

And maybe, future generations,
maybe, we will be quick and certain,
and we will fix it before—

It is
too late.

And it's the last thought
on my tired mind
when I shut off
all the machines that
surround me,

that surround me
like loved ones should.

I watch videos
of trees swaying, as
music from my app
plays and syncs up with
every shaking branch,
trembling in the wind,
wind I remember
and wind I feel through
the L E D screen.

I was addicted
and obsessed with
swiping left and right,
watching events,
switching from channel
to channel to—,
searching the net with
a flashlight from

my father's attic,
reading and gleaning
things the sun had already
illuminated.

Ironically, dead leaves flutter through my fingers, as I escape
the all-powerful glare I'm now accustomed to, am now attuned to.

4: Reality of the Situation

You will inherit
a sleek young silicon world.

It will not matter
when dead lights in Nature's eyes
are reawakened
by holographic tech. No,
it will not matter
when her creatures are on screens
as big as the horizon.

Young Plato sleeps, charging himself up,
waiting to collect info for

data collection, advertisements,
and companies, unseen, unheard,

unknown even to him. But, one day,
on the airwaves, these promises,

these distress signals inside his dreams,
these warnings from the past, scare him.

So, Plato wakes up, rewires
his circuits, dons sackcloth,
and screams these promises from
the rooftops and some balconies.

But no one is listening!
No one will ever listen!

and, maybe, future generations,

maybe I'm that screaming man
maybe, I should let my voice rest

because why should I scream if the trees
are all gone as soon as my mouth opens.

5: The Final Sigh

Beeping from the countryside.
Beeping from the streets outside.
Machinery whirs! Gears turn!
Cyborgs wheeze: dusty and diseased.
 Rats squirming in their tubing.

Over the horizon line,
 past decaying screens,
 a patch of land forms.
 It foams
 and groans.

Long sinewy arms covered in bark
roll dead ground up into small little balls
and, then, punt them to the bones of children,
wrapped up imperfectly in some trash-bags,
 who rise up in shambling motions and kick,
 who creakily sing and heavily drink,
 who beat on drums and strum on ancient lyres,
 who lay bodies down by funeral pyres
 and weep and laugh and dream
 and scream and sigh and sleep.

The circuits that held these long forgotten promises I have made are
lying dead in the streets too. The pages they were printed on fuel
the fire in the pyres burning on the corners. And only one promise
remains! this:

Nature will endure, even if
 we won't live to see it.