

# The Phone Stories

By  
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## Comedian.

I have just received word, via twitter, that the comedian I had enjoyed on my last visit to the Heavy Anchor had, unexpectedly, gone mad: apparently, he is locked in a catatonic stupor. Previously, I had engaged this same comedian in a discussion on the nature of his craft, when, initially, I intended only to complement him on how much I had enjoyed his performance, but then we got to talking about the nature of the comedian and how, it seemed, that the majority of these joking people seemed downright sad. Well, said the comedian, the truth is we joking people are never joking: we are, in fact, completely serious; exploiting the laughing mechanism for its paralytic effect, because the effect of the laughing mechanism prevents recourse from the hopeless truth, whenever it is mentioned. It was a stimulating remark, one which, I thought, had some scientific research to support it, somewhere, but the use of the term laughing mechanism repelled me, and actually compelled me to take another sip of beer. Of course, he said, the disadvantage of this habit of truth-masking is that no serious effort is made to rectify the problem, whatever it happens to be. It's scary, he said, and sad too: that man doesn't act on his laughing mechanism; he is amused by his truth mechanism. An interesting theory, I had said rather flippantly, you should explore that, I said, before shifting the topic of our conversation to something else, so as to not hear the word mechanism spoken again.

## Utopia.

My friend, Gambetti, had recently told me about his two nephews: both of which, he said, possessed a high degree of intelligence. One of which, according to Gambetti, had a knack for business; the other, invention. He said that the ladder child had a keen interest in world-improvement; an idea which had been deeply embedded in both of them, and that they were ruthlessly efficient in their studies. However, Gambetti told me, the ladder child feared that his success in world-improvement would, ultimately, only result in the negation of our biological existence; that all our technology does, or has ever done, he said, quoting the ladder child word for word, is serve to harden the demonic walls of our perpetual state prison, not help humankind. That is what he told me, Gambetti had said, and truth be told I had not the slightest idea how best to direct his development, so I, keeping to my usual character, had remained silent. He submitted none of his ideas to the patent office, he said. All had been burnt, he said. He had been found hanging from a hook in his dorm. It gives me pleasure, he said, to know that I do not belong to his generation. And I agreed.

## Riots.

Rioting had taken place after a nationwide power outage, as well as an unknown number of suicides. Leading psychoanalytic experts suggest that video gaming and, likewise, television watching was responsible, but disagreed as to why. The use of technology had, essentially, been extinguishing the impulse to commit these crimes by substitution, said one expert. The other expert said that the use had outright caused it, not suppressed the inevitable. Both produced good reasons for their positions. The public was not convinced.

Excuses.

Six years, William told me, that is how long my brother has isolated himself at the family lodge, and initially it was under the pretext of recovering from his alleged vision problems, which, however, he has only recently revealed to be chronic in nature. It's actually untreatable, he said, and also a direct result of following his doctors, and mothers, advice. I've unintentionally maimed my brain, William had said, quoting his brother word for word. He will not leave the family lodge, either. He is obsessed with his so-called scientific work (on apoptosis) and has completely lost touch with the real world, which he continuously describes as ugly, false. Naturally I did not care very much about what happened to Williams brother, but it was necessary for him to explain; so I could know the truth as to why it had been so long since we had last used his families lodge for one of our fourth of July bonfire events. There are papers everywhere, he said. They are black, terrifying, and unreadable, he said. Every page is grotesque, he said, and he uses the latest technology to help him, since he barely sees. He told me that he no longer cares for fingers, (calling them clunky) and insists that, in the future, the brain will connect itself to a machine; for the purpose of artifice manipulation. Our God is an artifice, he said, quoting his brother word for word, and by worshipping artifice we have rendered ourselves artificial: the universe we know isn't natural, he said, it's really an artifice created by artificer molecules. We are artificer molecule assemblages that have finally rediscovered how to artifice, and soon a new natural distortion will become the minds new home. William told me that, he believed, that the reason why his brother pursues such perverse lines of thought is to torment himself; for causing irreparable damage to his brain, because, he thinks, it had revealed itself to be no more than a perpetual lying machine. Who is encouraging this? I asked. No one, he said. He has no friends, he said that he no longer believes in them. Friendship is a lie, he said, quoting his brother word for word, there is not such a thing and there never was: there are only information exchange relationships struggling to mask over a universal monstrosity. That is what he said to me. I see, I said. Well, I said to William, if you call him mad, it will save you the trouble of explaining him. Truly, William said, after which we agreed to maintain the excuse that everything at the lodge had burnt down.

Video.

I only knew Tyler to watch two kinds of shows: those featured on the history channel, and the many nature documentaries available on the national geographic channel, so I don't know why you're asking me what affect these programs had on his decision to kill himself, Tyler's friend told the GBC news team. It's not like it is possible that any less than favorable views on life, and humanity, could have become elucidated to his brain, simply by watching these programs, (more or less religiously) said the friend of the suicide. Such programming, he said, as I'm sure you are aware, contains no arguments: only video. He therefore had no reason to feel that he was born only to exist as a study machine placeholder whose only function is to help the human race make itself extinct as quickly as possible. That is, more or less, what had been written on the wall of the school auditorium, correct? Yes, said the reporter. He seemed pretty normal to me, he said, and I won't think of him any differently, now that he's gone. That last bit is all we need, my boss had said, the rest is trash. Alright, I said, before I compiled the video.

Mrs. Wayfarer,

What a day. Today I had to ban our son from playing with the Wayfarer family, after Mrs. Wayfarer revealed herself to be a total maniac. It was an accident, I explained, that our son had hit a ball through her kitchen window, but to her it was an attack. Outright war, apparently; for after her initial blood curdling cry had ended, she immediately started swearing and stomping her feet though the house, and out the backyard door, all while swatting at the open sky, as if suddenly having to be exposed to the sky called for it to be pushed, out of her way by her hands, to keep it from crushing her. Barbarian brat! (That is what she started calling our son.) Don't you think I see the signs!? How the hell can you raise him to do things like this!? Wearing a mustache, barbarian, T-shirt and damaging other peoples property! What the hell is happening to this country? Remove that mustache T-shirt at once! Don't you know that hoisting up the mustache flag is a symbol of the rise of barbarism and social decay? (I didn't.) This is war! She said. Is that what you want? War!? Haven't you noticed the total lack of world wars: ever since our leaders shaved off their facial hair? (It had honestly never occurred to me.) As soon as this country elects such a person, I'm outta here! Do you hear me? My son isn't going to become fodder for your stupid mustache fueled antics! Mrs. Wayfarer then let out another cry. Am I really the only person alive whose aware of what is happening!? She said. How stupid are you people!? I'm living here, struggling to survive, just existing; like a canary in this coal mine society, trying my best not to die of a lung disease, and here you are throwing barbarian balls right into my own home! She then had started screaming for me to get out, which, of course, I was already trying to do, then I typed this up as soon as I got home, to extinguish her. It was all incredibly ridiculous. According to Mr. Wayfarer, Mrs. Wayfarer suffers from a recurring nightmare, where the nighttime sky drips black with human blood over mountains of pasted together animals. That is why I'm forever gardening, he said. The sky, for her, is enormous, suffocating, and even terrifying, while I, on the other hand, find the house to be suffocating. That is what he told me. Yeah, wow.

Irony,

In an elaborate twist of irony, a fourteen year old boy, having just got off the phone with the suicide prevention hotline, because, and I quote: he feared that the world would drive him mad and change the very nature of his soul for the absolute worst, has in fact resolved to live until the age of fifty, mainly for scientific research purposes. In his manifesto it is already written that he fully expects that his brain will be given the Nobel Prize for his contribution, and that, somewhere, he presumes there to be a machine which can, and I quote: put his soul back to its normal (and not insane) state.

Huntsman.

On one of our recent walks through the Colorado Spring Gorge we had encountered a huntsman, walking up the trail, who we had never seen before. This huntsman, for reasons unknown to me, inspired me to take out one of my cigarettes in order to smoke it, but my trouser pocket felt lighter then usual, I was thinking, and upon tapping it I recognized that I had forgotten to bring my lighter, so I asked the huntsman for a light, which, however, he didn't have. Sorry, I do not carry a lighter, said the huntsman, I don't smoke. That disappointed me, but then I didn't want to dismiss the newly encountered huntsman, because, I thought, that would be rude. What brings you to Colorado Springs? I had asked the huntsman, who at that moment took a moment to inhale, then exhale, a cloud of smoke from his vaporizer. Smoke, I

later learned, is certainly not the right word for what had left his mouth: it was vapor. That is when I reevaluated the manners of the huntsman, and concluded that he was actually a nice man, since I was mistaken. Oh, the huntsman said, I love nature, and the Native American tribes fascinate me, in particular: their concept of time. The huntsman then went on to explain how the smallest concept of time that the Native Americans could tolerate was the solar day, which, he said, he had learned about in first grade. Information, such as this, the huntsman had said, can be downright deadly; for I've been wishing to go backwards in time, so I can live with them, ever since. This puzzled me, since I had never heard about this concept, nor could I determine in what way it connected to the huntsman's love for the natural. My terrible grades always tormented me, he said, but my neighborhood walks, my nature walks, he called them, correcting himself, always alleviated my torment, or were formerly able, I mean, he said, correcting himself. Some families, the huntsman said, don't actually want human beings: they want chickens. Chickens, he said, that lay eggs. Of course, he said, I am not a chicken, much less an egg laying chicken, so my life has become nothing but round-the-clock-bartering-for-natural-things, which, he said, is necessary, since everything is owned. By now the huntsman's speech had taken a long time, and it was his long and unbearably arduous way of talking that made me think; that the huntsman might be a moron. However, the huntsman started to talk more about the subject of time and how, in fact, it did not exist. My professor told me, the huntsman had said, quoting his professor: that gravity is making the time-keeping mechanism behave sluggishly, not that time is really being slowed down. Anyway, the huntsman said, I'm tired of being bossed around by something that doesn't exist. Did you know, said the huntsman, that the suicide rates of Native Americans is higher than any population group in the United States? No, I said. But the huntsman's choice of topics made me think that he was possibly a psychoanalyst, so I asked him if he was, indeed, a psychoanalyst, but the huntsman said no, he was not a psychoanalyst, he was a huntsman, to which I said: oh, okay, shrugging my shoulders. But that is not to say that the conversation I had with the huntsman had been boring, it's just that I was getting tired, and also my companions glances seemed to suggest that anytime would be a good time to leave the company of the huntsman, so I then told the huntsman that we best be leaving soon. When at last we reached the bottom of the trail we encountered a park ranger medical unit, and they asked us if we had seen a huntsman, because, they said, a huntsman had been found dead. Shot in the head, they said, due to a hunting accident, they presumed. I told them everything. We were then told that it is not uncommon for people to procure a hunting license in order to commit a crime.

Swarm,

I'm not sure how it happened, Steve said, that, as I've aged, my ability to perceive groups of things has, in fact, become more sensitive, not less. For instance; when travelling it has become difficult to perceive the traffic, as such, and not a swarm, or a river. It pleases me to drive along with the traffic, but it sickens me to observe it, or worse, to instead be chauffeured through it. That is why I've brought this blindfold, Steve told me; for occasions such as this. Now, are you sure you don't want me to drive? Steve asked, while holding out the hideous blindfold. Yes, sorry, I told him: you're not insured. Besides, I too hate to be chauffeured sometimes, I thought, for similar reasons, though I could never see myself taking on such a wretched blindfold-wearing state. Steve did of course did not put on the blindfold, because, I presumed: he

probably knows how much I'd hate him for it. However, I couldn't stop turning over in my mind what he had said. There are days when I find the driving experience to be repellent, and days when I find the passenger experience to be equally repellent. It depends. Why, I asked myself, did Steve complain about the passenger experience, at this time? Aren't we both looking at the same traffic, and having, more or less, the same experience? This city isn't even that dense, like other cities, I thought. St. Louis even has generous amounts of trees, and the roads are well paved: sometimes too well, I thought. Perhaps the density of this really quite beautiful city will become similar to that of China, someday. But will people, like Steve, be able to tolerate living in such a city? Surely, I thought, that sickening level of density is in our future. That is when I rolled down the window, ever so slightly, to breathe. Then I remembered that Steve was older than me, and that, if you do anything for too long, it becomes unbearable. Perhaps that is why people are forever looking at screens, I thought: because looking at the world is unbearable for them. They need their screens, I thought, this screen-viewing is, in fact, a vulgar addiction that has infected the whole world. Soon the sight of the real world will be unbearable, I thought, and looking at screens will become an existential necessity. The screen distortion will become the real world, and the real world will be devoured by those operating inside the safety of the distortion. Oh no, I thought: what if Steve's distortion mechanism is breaking? Could the brain, and its thoughts, be what is simulating us to act, in much the same way as the stimulated swarm is acting now: to the detriment of the planet's good health? Surely there is nothing I can do or say to make even the smallest dent in this iron hard distortion: this world of screen-watchers. What good would that do, anyway? Do I really expect anything to change? That is what I thought, as I now recalled, driving through traffic. When at last we arrived at our destination we both, having seen the same swarm of people, entering and leaving the store, agreed to spend forty five minutes doing absolutely nothing.

It was the most pleasant thing for both of us.