Love and Nothing Else

Eric Cecil

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Love and Nothing Else

Also By Eric Cecil

A-Train Blues
God's Children
The Lifting of the Veil
The Song of the Spirit

www.cecilpublishing.com

I have found the one whom my soul loves.
Song of Solomon 3:4

For Zhen, Luka And Micah

Love and Nothing Else

Date

(In order to rise from the ashes you first have to be destroyed by the fire.)

I decided to start dating in 2015, which for me, an introvert to the extreme, someone who prefers books over people, meant that I needed to talk to a therapist first.

I got on one of those dating sites and my wife will tell you that I messaged her first, which I'm 95% sure she is right.

We met for coffee at Quill's on Bardstown Rd.

I walked in and she was in line, getting her coffee and was wearing some short shorts. I knew it was her from her black Asian hair.

And you know, it was ordinary, but extraordinary in the sense that before we met, we didn't exist to each other and now these years later we have an intense intimate relationship.

We talked about her being Buddhist, family, our education, and that she has a PhD in engineering.

We tried to set each other at ease.

After we had our coffee, she went to the bathroom and gave me her phone number.

And I remember a friend told me, "Eric, don't fuck around and play games. Just give her a call."

And so we began.

We went to dinner and a movie, which sounds really unoriginal, but safe for me.

She wore a navy blue dress with white circles on it that had a collar at the top.

We ate at Carrabba's on Hurstbourne.

She had the Chicken Marsala.

She wouldn't allow me to pay for her dinner.

We saw *Jurassic World* which was out then.

I dropped her off and asked if we could go out again and she said we could.

That was our first date, pretty ordinary, but it meant everything.

Now our thoughts rest with each other.

Just A Kiss

Life changed in just one kiss.
The day, the night, the morning, noon, the evening, at midnight, the music changed with touching lips.
Angels sighed and took a10-minute coffee break after a path of love perpetuated with endowed care emerged.
It’s just a kiss, but it’s a declaration of love being sworn tomorrow and those angels saw a new generation being born.
It’s just a kiss around Xmas under the mistletoe, a child’s game but it’s what eases our pain; a moment of bliss that saves us from life’s abyss.
It’s just a kiss, but arguments cease, forgiveness crystallizes, peace is restored and silence ends.
It's just a kiss for a newborn, but it’s the bonds of unconditional love from mom, dad, from grandparents, it’s being loved into the family.
It’s just a kiss during difficult times, it refreshes the mind and breathes new life into the beleaguered spirit, so touch me, hold, squeeze me…, kiss me.

Light

let
the
lonesomeness
end
with
the
touch
of
your
hand
with
the
distance
closing
between
us
as
darkness
fades
by
the
light
of
your
eyes.

Amy Winehouse (;)

we
sit
on
a
plaid
blanket
in
the
shade
drinking
lemonade;
a
lazy
day
spent
listening
to
Amy's
Serenade.

Into Your Arms

i leave a traveled path,
broken hearts
have traveled before.
i enter through The Door.
into your arms!
into your arms!
into your arms!
i ache no more.

Sketches of Spain

If the apocalypse ever comes
If nuclear bombs ever drop
If love lies dying
And dreams stop…
I hope I'm lying in bed
With you at the time,
Writing a poem about love,
Listening to Miles Davis'
Sketches of Spain.

Smoky Mountains

We decided that we wanted to go on our first weekend trip together so we booked a cabin in the Smoky Mountains. We drove around the mountains, to the summit, hiked a little and rested at night. We just bummed around. I tried to show your mother how to play chess and we played a few games. She “won” one game. It was a relaxing, low-key trip.

We drove back to Louisville in your mother’s white Ford. I had Rex at the kennel or someone watched him. I was living in my little house and she had a spacious one-bedroom apartment.

She dropped me off at home and left. I distinctly remember being there with the dog and I missed not having your mom with me.

Previously, I didn’t mind being alone most of the times, except the times I felt alone… like at weddings, which I dreaded, or other family functions.

I felt a void after that weekend. An emptiness only she could fill.

My life had turned, toward something greater, when I wanted more of us and less of me.

Valentine's Day Letter

There was something that you said while we were in bed, I would have to address it once you said it. I think that it is important to do so. We were talking about writing and you told me that I had written poems about a lot of girls. This is true, I have, but all that is left of those girls are words on a page, in books that I do not read. They are vanishing memories that I do not revisit. I have not written anything about you or for you, because to do so would put you in a category with them. It would almost be cheapening you and our relationship by placing you in poems like I did them. So I haven't written anything. I also wanted to have time with you so that I didn't feel the need to write poems about you. I want to keep some things as ours.

But as a poet, I do like to write from time to time.

I want to put this on paper: I love you. I know that we tell each other this, but I do love you. I'm glad that you have been patient with me, because no one has ever loved me that way that you do. I'm grateful for that love and for you, being in my life.

I love you more than physically, though I admit it's hard to keep my hands off you. It's hard not to touch you or want to hold you or kiss you and your neck and ears– it's hard to do those things, but if that were all there was, it wouldn't be enough. I think that we would do our dance, the music would end and we would part, if the only thing between us was physical attraction.

The lasting attraction is the delight in who you are as a person. It's you that I am really attracted to, not to lessen your physical attributes. Your kindness would have to be your outstanding characteristic. And this kind heart of yours, a quality of a rarity. You go out of your way to be a good friend to the people in your life and I sense that you really cherish your friends; you don't take them for granted but are grateful to have them.

I also admire the courage that put you on a plane to a country that you didn't know with the hope of a better life. The word faith often gets thrown around so much that, at times, it has little meaning. But I look at your amazing faith in leaving behind all the love and comforts of home and country to come to America. I hope you always remember your faith and that I can have the faith and courage that you have. You have often told me that I am a good person, that I treat you with kindness and that I am good to you. But you are just as good and gentle. Your kindness and gentleness seem to be effortless, like breathing. It's a part of you, like your brown eyes. I have to work at being a good person. I need a group of people around me who constantly teach me to be less selfish and less self-centered.

No one is perfect, but I want you to know that I appreciate the attributes that form your goodness and humbleness. We will find our imperfections together, out most glaring shortcomings, as I know that you have yours and I have mine. We will have our first fight and at times there will be difficulties between us, but I hope that we can remember our kindness and love for one another.

I want to tell you the story of our meeting since we are celebrating our first Valentine's Day together. It actually occurred before we met and you can take this as a coincidence. But I have had too many coincidences in my life not to recognize a pattern.

I was in therapy last year and had been discussing several issues with my therapist, including my lack of dating and changing sponsors. I had a list of changes that I wanted to make under the supervision of a therapist.

I actually signed up for eHarmony a few years before I used it. I had a profile saved and I would occasionally get emails from them, wanting me to sign up and offering me discounts. I told my therapist that I was going to change sponsors and when I did this, I would sign up with eHarmony, as soon as I got another email offering me discounts.

I went to the Token Club a few days later and Leon was there. After the meeting was over, I went to Leon and thanked him for everything that he had done for me, but that I was going to get a new sponsor. He took it okay, considering this was out of the blue.

My cell was phone turned off at the meeting as it always is. I turned my phone back on, thinking of how I just let Leon go. My email sounded when my phone came back on and it was eHarmony, offering me discounts. I was not looking forward to dating, but felt prompted to do so by the immediacy that the email came in relation to talking to Leon. I signed up that day. I find the timing interesting. What if I got the email a week later? Would we have met?

I'm so grateful that we did meet, by either chance or fate. I'm grateful for the time I have spent with you; loving you and you me. You are always the bright spot in my day, getting your texts, evenings spent with you, seeing you on the weekends. I will write beautiful poems about you, like laying in bed with you, with hours to burn and doing nothing to do for the day or drinking Turkish coffee and Pasha's and the little things, like holding your hand, snuggling with you on the couch. Just spending time with you, resting with you. I hope we have a good Valentine's Day.

Love

Light
the
candle,
let
it
glow,
let
the
wax
drip
slow.
I'm
spinning,
my
head
hits
the
pillow
no
more
tossing
and
turning
no
more
looking
for
home.
The
morning
awakens,
she
slowly
dances
with
me
wistfully
as
the
world
is
aflame.

We

you
and
i
and
love
is
We.

she
is
with
me
in
the
quiet
night
while
i
dream.

she
is
here
naked
under
the
covers
to
kiss
me
on
the
ear,
to
love
me,
to
talk
to
me,
as
the
sun
comes
up.

you
and
i
and
love
is

We.

Crazy Love

holding you, touching you, loving you, kissing you….
smiling with you, laughing with you,
looking at you, talking with you…
sleeping with you, listening to you,
waking up with you…
and our crazy love.

Our House

We had that look in our eyes and went to the jewelry store to look at diamonds and rings.
I have always wanted to go to Sedona. I heard it was beautiful and mystical so we booked two plane tickets.

We checked into our room and went hiking on one of the beautiful sandstone mountains.
I decided to propose then, at the beginning of the trip, on the mountain.

Despite talking about getting married, looking for an engagement ring…I was nervous. It wasn't the fear of her saying no, but of the enormity of the door we were opening.

We were on a plateau. I walked away from her and then said, "Hey come over here. Come look at this." I didn't get on one knee because of the nerves. But when she asked, "What is it?" I pulled out the ring and asked.

I picked up a sandstone rock where we were standing and put it in my pocket, almost in a Biblical/ Native American fashion. "Upon this rock we decided to get married."

This was October 2016. We were engaged. We drove to the Grand Canyon, hiked in the desert and enjoyed the red and tan shades of beautiful Sedona.

We flew home the night the Cubs won the World Series. We weren't living together, but after we were engaged, I moved my possessions in, sold my house and put the money I made from the sale of my house on the amount owed on her house, which became our house.

What's In A Name?

I had the very cliched moment of clarity when I was a patient at Caritas Peace Hospital 20 years ago and realized I'm an alcoholic.

I was in group therapy and said that I drank because I was lonely.

A heavy-set African American woman then said, (direct quote), "We've picked someone out for you."

That statement did two things: it played with my head, but it allowed me to relax, because I believed what she said.

We had our first date in June and by Christmas, we were an exclusive couple. Not sure when that happened, but we talked about it.

We were driving to my dad's house to put up some Xmas lights for his annual party. We were at a traffic light and Zhen casually said, "My name in Chinese means truth."

Later, we were at Highland Coffee and she wrote down the character of her name and also her last name. She said that her combined name means the ability to discern right from wrong.

I think about the strings that had to be pulled for us to meet. She was born on the other side of the world, spoke Chinese before learning English, lived in a different culture and only came to the US for graduate school at the University of Cincinnati. We met in Louisville, KY.

Everything is a miracle or nothing is.

Note

I haven't written anything since working on The Song of the Spirit, which took a lot of time and energy. I wrote you a poem and a Valentine's Day letter last year, but that's about it, I haven't figured out how to write living together because writing has always been a little secretive, something done behind closed doors. We have also been extremely busy with the engagement, selling the house, finishing The Song of the Spirit, and and working.

I love you!

Since we met my life has changed for the better because of you, I don't regret the time I spent alone. I had to go through that time, but I'm grateful that we met and love each other as we do today. Thinking about being alone is different from how it actually was. I could say that I was lonely then, but that is only in light of dating you. I did not know how lonely I was because I didn't have a point of reference as I do now.

I love you!

I'm grateful for the stability besides the love and friendship that you have given me. I don't feel like everything is up in the air and could change at a moment's notice. I know life can be chaotic, but I feel settled, grounded and peaceful with you. Before we met I knew that I was not at a place of refuge. I knew I would find someone and that I would sell my house; that was my first house, not my last. I'm not sitting in the question. You've helped me see some answers in my life, by supporting me unconditionally. I know that change never stops, but I feel like I can go through all of life's changes with you.

I love you!

Only You

i give
my promise
freely to you.
i give my heart
solely to you.
staying up all night
listening to
Let It Be.

at dawn
swimming
in the sea.

on the boardwalk
eating
saltwater taffy.

i give
my hope
just to you.
i give
my dreams
unreservedly to you.

i'm whole
with only you.

Home

In your arms I find my bearing.
My spirit sings.
In your arms i breathe,
I dream.
So one moment please,
Before departing in a world of discord
In a world of little rest,
In a world that takes my breath.
Hold me in your arms,
At home with you.

Summer Garden

I can’t think rationally while washing dishes in the sink,
Coltrane’s "My Favorite Things" bounces around me,
through me and I feel every note.
I go outside and reach,
my fingertips touch
the day
the disappearing sun
the sky
the stars
the clouds
the night
the stars pulsing blue
while my love unceasingly reaches for you.
And I take these things and plant them in the ground
and wait for them to bloom, thinking of the harvest moon.

This Spring

i feel the hope of the spring.
this will end, this disease.
this will end, this quarantine.
this will end, this injustice.
set it right, sings the songbird,
set it right, sings creation,
set it right, as we listen…
to our deepest dreams.
this will end as all ends, to begin.
and what is set aside,
who is forgotten, will shine.
it is ending, this ancient cold;
it is ending, this cold blush sunset;
it is ending, this bare winter;
oh! I see it in the spring!
oh! i see it in the summer!
oh! I see it in the fall!
oh! I see it in the winter!
it will end, these harsh words.
it will end, these thoughtless actions.
it will end, this poisoned atmosphere.
it will end...this war on…
humanity.
the howl lessens to breeze,
the bitterness melts in the light,
the hardness softens at
dawn,
lighting love, in bed,
with your head on my shoulder.
you're all I have she breathes.
hold me with love, I cling.
let us arise,
our soul aflame…
believe in…
(peace)
hope for…
(peace)
live in…
(peace)
this spring.

Day 1

When the nurse told us that our 1 day old son wasn't breathing properly and his heartbeat was irregular at that moment I was not an atheist or agnostic or a Christian or a Buddhist, not a Muslim or Hindu, I'm not Jewish or any other member of a dignified system of belief.

My well thought of, often pondered conception of God went out the window.

I'm a new father throwing up a naked prayer asking for help and it's difficult to say your will be done when it's my son. It's difficult to feel faith when fear seizes. It's difficult to breathe when the wind has been knocked out of me...but I say that unfiltered prayer...

And I remember that God has a track record of answering the cries of the desperate. So, I begin to breathe even as I learn about EKGs, ultrasounds, blood tests and cardiograms.

I want God to take a wand, make him well right now, right now, right now. But God doesn't have a wand or a spell. He has time, the hands and hearts of the nurses, technology for thoughtful doctors and an unceasing, unrelenting, all-consuming, passionate, facet wide open, epic love for all Her children, both grown and small.

The Turning Point

The turning point in the hospital came for us at the same time.

I came back from dinner in the cafeteria and entered her room. Your mother and maternal grandparents were there and they had a disagreement. I can't remember what it was about and it is insignificant in retrospect. It upset your mother because of what was going on with you.

The doctors could not explain why your blood oxygen level was dropping. They were in the process of running an assortment of regular tests. I imagined the worst and wondered if heart surgery could be performed on a newborn. Or worried about your brain. And your lungs.

So, it was an intense time.

I saw your mother upset. We played some relaxing music and we got in bed, holding each other. We pulled the covers over our heads, shielding us from the world.

I can't explain it, but in the midst of all the tests and fear, I felt intense gratitude and joy. I stayed under the covers, euphoric. I was so grateful that tears came down my face. I knew at that point that everything was going to be alright.

Your mother experienced something also and commented on it a day later.

Home II

This was after they tested your brain, heart, lungs, internal organs—twice.

I remember seeing all of the electrodes stuck to your head when they were trying to determine if your brain was having seizures.

You had taken an ambulance ride from Baptist to the children's hospital. That's the hospital where your aunt Molly was treated for cancer. It was there that a nurse put two and two together and determined that when you took a bottle, you weren't breathing and your oxygen level would drop. Then you went to Norton's hospital across the street. Your mother stayed with you when night came and I'm pretty sure that she stayed up all night, not using a bottle to feed you.

Your doctor was an amazing woman. She was African and tall, formidable, impressive. She had a presence. A troupe of other doctors followed her around, listening to what she had to say. She said you would have to stay two nights, but after the first night, the doctor talked to your mother and I knew she was going to let us take you home a day early. Your mother didn't pick up on what she was meaning, but when the doctor said that we could take you home, your mom went to the doctor and immediately gave her a hug, because the dr gave us that precious news.

The Ballad of Luka Jia

We saw the OBGYN on Friday and the plan was that your mom was going to be induced Monday evening and you would be born on Tuesday. I was so sure of this. Sunday, I went out and bought some eggs, sausage, biscuits and cheese to make a casserole for a relaxed Monday morning breakfast.
We went to bed Sunday night and I was in bed, beneath the covers, when your Mom said, "I think my water broke." I got out of bed and sure enough there were droplets and a small puddle.
I was focused on the 5-5-5 rule concerning contractions. I wasn't prepared. Your mom directed me to call the hospital. We got our bags and your Grandparents came with us. Your Mom was checked in. I called your other Grandparents and told them what was happening. They came to the hospital as did Aunt Michael.

There was a lot of excitement about your birth—.joy, thrill and anticipation and some anxiety about the ride.

As the night progressed so did the contractions. Your mom sat on a big rubber ball and we held hands, squeezing at the pain. We considered the contractions mountains and named some of the peaks on the monitor your mother was hooked to. She was given medication that helped her sleep a little. And I dozed off as well.

When she woke up she decided to get an epidural from a Dr. born in eastern Europe.

Night turned into day, fulfilling its promise to cede to the light and it came time to push. Determination isn't the right word when I watched your Mom's face. She was fierce like a desert sun beating down on a wayward traveler.

I was standing by your mother, near her head when one of the nurses announced that they could see your head and hair. They asked if I wanted to see. Some men had warned me not to look, but I did. How many times am I going to get to see a baby born?

I resumed my position by your mom's head, out of the line of fire. I watched your head coming out of her body. I watched the progress, and out you came.

A nurse put you onto your mother's chest and I experienced something very strange. Looking at you, I felt all the ways that I had identified my Self by were stripped away. I stood naked and bare. I felt small, insignificant. My definitions of Self were gone and I didn't feel this gently; I felt a spiritual and physical reaction. But I felt grounded by the miracle of your birth, relief and joy, humbled by the awe of fatherhood.

I look back a year later and realize that those who work in the delivery room are called into the presence of Divine Mystery. They bring life into the world, while angels sing at every birth and embrace the dying at every death.

I remember standing God's presence, not feeling fear, but awe. I was not trembling but shocked and surprised by your entrance. I looked at you, an infant baby who began with two people, strangers to one another, carrying the hope of love and meeting one another with that hope. And now you are, part of a greater reality.

It's been a year since you were born. You've been a constant, daily joy. You're a happy baby, with non stop energy, a wonderful laugh and amazement about the world around you. And every day, our love for you deepens as we sacrifice our Selves, to make room for new love.

The Ballad of Micah Huang

Your due date was on May 2, 2023.
You were two and a half weeks early.
Just like when your brother was born, your mother's water broke
when we were getting ready for bed.
I was actually in bed.
We were a little more experienced this time.
We called the hospital and decided to wait a few hours at home.
We called Momaw to come over to stay the night with Luka.
I slept a little and we decided to go to the hospital.
Your mother had decided that she did not want medication for the pain.
She wanted a natural birth experience.
She didn't like how she recovered following Luka's birth.
I also think she wanted to do it, because it's a challenge like climbing a mountain.

She also decided that she was going to use a pool to help with the pain.
It was an inflatable blueish pool.
When the contractions came I would help her in and out of the pool.
My line was "it will pass, it will pass."
Your mother would squeeze my hand so tight that my wedding ring
would cut into my hand and I took it off.
The doula came and her line was, "you've got this, you've got this."
Your labor was faster than Luka's.

The OBGYN came in and you could tell she was in charge.
She had sandy blonde hair and had a no-nonsense attitude.
She would stand with her arms crossed watching how things were progressing.
She would talk to the nurses, directing them and when it came time to push,
the doctor and the nurses would say, "push, push, push, push".
They sounded like a choir of angels.

I was standing by your mother's side holding her hand.
I felt complete and total bliss waiting for you to be born.
Your mother was exhausted, but after another series of pushing out you came.
A nurse took you over to a table to check you out.
I followed the nurse and you were given to your mother.
You weighed more than Luka when he was born.
6 1/2 pounds.

You're a beautiful baby, who has a great laugh and you're always ready to smile.
You have a calmness which we hope you keep.
You rarely sleep all night.
We are so happy to see you and Luka play together, especially in the tub.
You love water and splashing.
We love you no more and no less than Luka.
Like your brother, you will always be our baby.

Giving

You wake at 2 a.m. and your mother is exhausted. I'm less so, as she has taken most of the responsibility of getting up at night to comfort you, to feed you. So, I've taken over feeding you, hoping she can get some rest. I want her to sleep as much as she can, but she gets up at 4 a.m. to pump milk.

Then she wakes up at 7 am to go to work.

This is a mother. Setting aside her needs for yours. I battle because I'm selfish in many ways and don't possess the giving that she has.

Cherokee Park

I see you walk in the grass, fall on your bottom, stand up,
walk again, smile and laugh.
Days will go by, calendars will turn, midnight balls will drop
and you will probably grow into a surly teenager.
But you are at this moment;
forever a toddler,
etched in our minds through the span of reality.

A Mother's Hope

Sweet baby in his mother’s arms.
He’ll never be safer and can’t be more loved.
The mother sighs and smiles.
Nothing will come to him that isn’t meant to come.
Nothing will ever harm him that isn’t meant to heal.
Sorrow that touches him will only turn to joy.
All his tears will be wiped away with gentle hands.
And she hopes these things as he’s rocked to sleep.

Coming Home

In the dim light, in bed, we're castaways, drifting away,
silence upon us, our shore safe, untouched by the world.
Luka and Micah sleep and dream of simple things like love and kings and queens;
may enchantment never leave…
A wife, children, dreams of my youth.
Now, come true, what is left but praise and gratitude?
Oh God! Who am I?
What did I do so outstanding,
when I've done so little,
to have received so much?

The Life

…going to daycare, getting out of the house on time, going to the grocery store, cooking lunch and dinner, cleaning top to bottom, washing dishes, going swimming, fighting him during his morning routine, him not listening, fighting traffic, working eight hours with your brain exploding, doing the night routine, the exhaustion the exhaustion the exhaustion, the bath, changing clothes into pjs, don't forget reading books and brushing his teeth, rocking them to sleep, the battle thereafter, trying to teach them how to love and give love, and so much more, so much more…but it's our happiness… don't let that get lost…this is the life we always wanted …and so let us make a joyful sound…awaken the stars sleeping in the night.

Roses

To love you two is like cotton candy, cracker jacks, nine innings and you both falling asleep on the way home.

It's easy to love you two in your rain jackets, boots, rain hats. We watch you play in the rain, one of you to the nearest puddle, where you promptly sit down.

It's easy to love you two, hold you, playing hide-and-seek and hiding in the laundry room. Mommy asks if you are in there and you answer "no" through the closed door.

It's easy to love you two, washing you both in bubbles. Our nightly routine and you dry in your fox towel. Then daddy puts on your pull-up and pajamas. We watch you all wrestle before reading books, before sleep.

You all are our fresh winter roses for our windowsill, a reminder of love during times of difficulty.

We will always comfort you like milk and honey soothes afternoon tea.

The Happiest of Days

These are the happiest of days—
The virus.
The fear.
The politics.
The tension.
The pain.
The protests.
The unrest.
The chaos of Love overcoming;
the struggle of humanity
is to see “you,”
as We,
different,
yet the same.

This goes on outside,
while spending time with you,
homebound.
Watching you and your dance,
seeing your joy.
And now it’s nap time.
Your head is on my shoulder,
as I rock you, your breathing slows,
as I rock you, your eyes are heavy,
as I rock you, we drift,
you to sleep,
me into the moment.

The Love We Make

She lays me down,
tired,
providing the spark
that lights the fire.
And this is real.
And this for the times we've been silent,
the times we've gone to bed hurt,
but still love each other.
And this is for the tears we've cried,
the secrets we hide,
the melancholy we give,
the hope we live,
this is for the exhaustion of raising two kids.
This is the emotional intimacy of marriage
expressed in the love we make.
We dance on the wall,
in the smoke,
consumed in the heat,
far off we hear jazz,
we rest in peace.

Tears

Hurt,
your tears have started falling
down your cheek,
so let me wipe them away
with my sorrow,
knowing I caused them.

Aces

music turned up, windows rolled down,
hearing every sound
with the babies in the back
can't get enough of Dead and Company
while i spot a dreadlocked hippie
sporting an untrimmed beard,
in uniform,
wearing skinny jeans,
vans,
oversized toboggan,
protesting conformity.
head to a speakeasy
where the night's host gets goosed by the Holy Ghost
so money for the poor, out the back door.
i sit down to play poker all night
and on my first hand
win a space flight to Jupiter.
catch a star.,,
sail away…
sail away…

morning comes,
the sun is on the rise
and i have rings on my fingers
and a gleam in my eye.
it comes as no surprise;
i have a pocket full of money.
my Aces down spoke without a sound.
now, home-bound,
to be with the ones i love.

My Sons

You were both conceived in the dream from where we all came,
where we'll return.
And that dream will never die
as long as a drop of love permeates in an ocean of fear.
You are that drop of love, among many, always turning the tide.
And remember that no matter what you've done and who you've hurt,
love is waiting.
Forgiveness is a door that never closes.
Be kind to yourselves.

This is your Blessing:
I hope that you don't win all your battles but learn from all your losses.

An Hour Past Midnight

Lay me down an hour past midnight,
take this pain away, this…another disappointment.
Another year of unrealized dreams.
I can't get up… the bedspread over my head,
lend a hand and love me gently.

Untitled (Sunbeams)

I.

when we tell you that we love you so much,

it means our love for you two…

is greater than all the stars burning in the heavens.

than all the salt dissolved in the endless oceans.

than all the sand resting in the unforgiving Sahara.

our love is greater…

than all the whistling winds that have forcefully blown.

than all the dreamer's dreams that have ever roamed.

than all the clouds obscuring sunlight on cold winter days.

our love is greater…

than all the blades of grass growing from the bountiful earth.

than all the snowflakes that have uniquely fallen.

than all the roses waking in the newborn spring.

our love is greater…

than all the pumpkins tanning in the harvest fall.

than all the slow sunsets that have spectacularly faded.

than all the long nights gratefully erased.

our love is greater…

than all the songs solemnly remembered.

than all the tears that flood gentle rivers.

than all the bittersweet memories of lost loved ones.

our love is greater…

than all the heartache that addiction has created.

than all the secrets that need to be told.

than all the trauma healing in broken hearts.

our love is greater…

than all the injustices not righted.

than all the words angrily spoken.

than all the promises of peace that have been broken.

our love is greater…

than all the smoking barrels coloring the ground crimson.

than all the bombs horribly maiming.

than all the captives chained by fear.

II.

this is the love

passed through generations.

this is the love

waiting for paths yet taken.

this is the enduring love

God has for all people.

III.

our love is…

all the stories we tell you before bedtime.

the pain we feel that comes with your tears.

the fear that we feel when you're ill.

our love is…

the times we've seen your innocence smiling.

when we pick you up at the end of the day from school.

watching you explore your world of imagination.

our love…

is all the times you've slept on our shoulders rocking.

is all the nights with sleep sacrificed.

is the world we hope you see.

our love…

you will never have to earn it,

our love…

you will always have its beautiful mystery.

our love…

for you two is…

full of sunbeams and awe.

Part 2

Poet Again

I haven't worn those clothes in years and yet, I'm going to slip them on to see if they still fit. They're the ones with attitude, defiant. They're the ones that were destined to take a stand. The label says poet. I put them in the back of the closet, because they didn't fit anymore.

All seems to be falling down. I stand with my country, torn, battered, divided. Hated by one, hated by the other. That's not something that I want to participate in. Our souls are not red or blue or black or white. These colors are powerful in our humanity but meaningless to the Spirit. Our history is oppression, division, racism and violence, but also redemption and inspiration, a desire to be more and better than what we are.

So I look at those clothes, torn by experience, singed by the flames of madness, patched by the hope of recovery. I'm hesitant to put them on. They take me where I can get lost in my mind. Fear says, "no one will ever be so moved as to do anything or change anything." Fear may be right. But goodness and love matter to me, so I pick up those clothes washed clean by living water.

Poet again.

In My Mind

I remember writing in my head the first time I came back from Florida. I was 16. Molly was still alive and was driving my car. She was speeding, about 90. She only had so much time and was in a hurry to live as much as she could.

There was a Stone Temple Pilots song on and I sat in the back seat and began writing in my mind. That's where it starts, a thought, a moment of inspiration. My best poems never get written, they're here— in the checkout line or mowing the grass—then they're gone.

I feel slightly anxious when I'm not writing. I'm thinking of it constantly. There's not much of an off switch.

I try to enjoy those periods of writing, because it will eventually dry up.

There is writing to do now. But it goes unattended.

Part of it is getting older, knowing that life has other delights and challenges.

I spend my time with you, with Luka and Micah. When we have time at night, we relax, read or watch tv.

David

I gather my stones of spiritual experience during difficult times like David gathered his. I see doubt, but will eventually hit my mark, again resurrecting hope.

Coward (s)

Don’t be elusive and speak in riddles, especially when everyone knows you’re a racist... Stand up and shout it if that’s what you believe.

Be proud with that cross around your neck accompanied by hatred all over your face.

Take off the bed sheet, be seen.

But instead you give a politician’s answer and say things like “I can’t recall” or “I don’t remember.” Your views are public. People have read them. We know what you are.

Own it.

I’m not sure what is worse: the racism or the coward who doesn’t claim it.

Breathing Money

Thank God for the ground
the six inches of topsoil
the plow
the hands that work the fields
and for the people that know that life depends on the earth and the soil.
And thank God for the hunters who appreciate the land
the anglers who stand by the lakes and streams…
thank God for the people that are trying to save the water
the mountains
the trees
the bees
the animals
the birds
the ocean reefs
the endangered
and we are endangered as we destroy what is sacred and holy.
Thank God for the tree huggers
the beatniks
the peaceniks
the hippies
the pacifist
the activists
the protesters howling for justice
the hipsters
the sisters from different misters
the brothers from other mothers.

Thank God for the father
the mother
the painters
the poets
the musicians
the bookworms
the nerds
the outcasts
the underdogs
the social workers
the nurses
the teachers
the preachers of love
the ministers to the sick
the helpers of the poor
the truth tellers
the storytellers.
Thank God for the young
the idealistic
the comedians
the compassionate
the calm
the tender hearted
the bleeding hearts

and the lovers of life…
the lovers of our planet because efforts to save earth are efforts
to save humanity
and no matter what happens in this political climate
this darkness
this EPA
only in name
who lifted regulations on methane emissions
which only money explains…
love will win.
God is working among us,
through us
for the planet's survival.
She is on the side of Her creation
which She will not allow to perish
and She doesn't lose.
Ever.

Rain

Let your love fall from heaven and quench the earth's pain.
There wouldn't be children dazed from war, covered in dust and our ignorance.
The crime is, he's a picture today, but his life and country are thrown away tomorrow.
And so I pray for rain.

Songs

Let us hear the laughter of children from Syria, and with their love let us rebuild our ravaged Middle East; let us hold hands and offer a simple prayer, thanking God for being Our Father and Mother.
Let us heal our families, not only our blood relatives but our family as once we were— broken apart, but coming together again. Let us find the love to see Humanity as Love Supreme sees us—without races and divisions but humanity suffering. We have lost affection for another and the interconnection of all life.
Let our deepest dreams of wholeness come true. And no more war. No more war. No more war. No more war…

In days of peace, when the night retires and fades to a light that never ends, when rivers born from joyful tears wipe away our blood on the ground, when trees bear new buds and forests offer sanctuary for animals hunted to near extinction, let us sing songs of exhalation.

Bologna Alley

He's on the street freezing. Dreaming of a place called home, but his disease has him now. He's sworn off so many times, yet he finds himself with a cardboard sign panhandling for dimes.

The murder asks with indignation "Am I my brother's keeper?"

If mortgages were paid by love and kindness for strangers, how long or short would the line stretch for a bologna sandwich in Louisville's Bologna Alley.

Note to Self

Give up the quest for moral perfection!
It's inconceivable and impossible.
Your energy is needed elsewhere.

The Message Part II Section 7 Verse 3 Titled: Totality

love God
who is
your neighbor
(period)

Junk Day Shame

the ill thoughts
the thoughtless words
the high tone
the silence
you mean more to me
than being right or wrong
more to me than my ego
you mean more to mean than
what a dictionary full of words
can convey
so I apologize for my selfishness
which caused you sorrow.

Fear

If I hadn't gotten mercy I would have killed myself or someone else on those nights when I drove home with one eye shut, the other trying to find the road. If I had not received grace I would have killed some state trooper or some innocent bystanders when I made my way through That Night. And if my punishment fit my crime, I would have spent two years in prison.

In my most reckless act, instead of death, God gave me life and I don't think that She freed me from my chains so that I can sit around and watch paint dry. Or to be timid, afraid or small, though at times I am.
And I think of all the gifts God has given me…
All that God has given me…
Yet I still struggle with fear.

Lexington, Ky

It took more than a decade to go back and it was just 80 miles away, but it's where I caught the plague. I went to see a football game. I didn't recognize the streets. I had no bearing. I was orienting myself by the bars on the street corners. We left after the game. I went back weeks later. I saw apartments where I used to live, where I extinguished.

And I went to that place, maybe you remember that place, where I went in cracked and came out in pieces. The bars. The drinks. The… and I didn't choose, per se, to participate, any more than a piece of metal feels the attraction and surrenders to pull of the magnet. I was unsteady, walking up to the door, as I returned to the scene of the crime. I sat and looked at the menu; no one was there, except the ghosts roaming in my mind. It was bizarre. The pain belonged to a time past. I ate and left, vowing to come back.

Dear Friend

The past...
The past never seems to stop,
warm memories still this broken heart.
An invisible man without a name
they tell him he shouldn't feel shame;
his feelings never change.
He calls me late at night,
can't get free, lost at sea,
drowned in decades of misery.
It's Autumn now,
ashes ride the wind,
but spirit never ends.
I remember my friend...
No tears, just days gone by.
You're better now,
with love at your end.

Constant Gratitude

I had been burned out for many years. I stayed as long as I could, partly because I thought it was God's will that I continue working as a case manager for the homeless.

I had a long break over Xmas 2022 and during that time I was coming back to life.

I jokingly told my wife a few days before my vacation ended that I was approaching my enlightenment.

I came back on a Monday and felt good, but by Friday… dead inside again. I could no longer stay.

I don't really know God's will other than in the moment, which is hard to capture.

I applied for a job at a psychiatric hospital on Saturday and received a call on Monday asking when I could schedule a phone interview.

God's will: Clean and fast; matching my ability to move and accept.

I work at the hospital where I was a patient 20 years ago when I had my life-changing spiritual experiences.

That time in my life, the hospital, getting sober, is like it all happened yesterday.
I disagree with what some people say about being sober, like "if all I got were sober, it wouldn't be enough."

They're talking about being emotionally sober, being mature and I'm slowly progressing to that point.

I'm so grateful for just being physically sober and relatively sane.

I've seen so many people over twenty years that can't say that, because they're locked behind a closed door, drunk or in the cemetery.

Remember Me

pick up your gun
feel the weight
aim it with your fear
pull the trigger with hate
explodes from the barrel
smoking shades of gray
as I lay dying, do nothing…
do nothing…
do nothing…
but pray.

Yet Again

I don't know if this is the truth or not, but it seems to me that in every school shooting there's always a gun involved and in every school shooting someone pulls the trigger.

And we like to argue over half the truth.

Someone will bring up the Second Amendment while someone is being buried and we can't decide which is the more important issue.

And just an opinion, between you and me, respectfully, I don't think anyone will break down, cry and grieve for the rest of their lives, especially on birthdays, holidays and anniversaries, over not being able to buy an AR15.

Except for people like Timothy McVeigh.

That's where I'm with yet another school shooting heading for repeat.

Inspiration

Is it from an endless iCloud in the clouds.
Is it from music?
Is it an overload of espresso?
Is it from disquieted spirits speaking, gathered around a fire?
Is God knocking at the door?
Is it from a sky filled with a kaleidoscope?
Is it from a sunset that never ends?
Is it from vast oceans that stretch as far as imagination can take it?
Is it from forests, the mountains on high?
Is it from speaking to the wind?
You've captured me once more.
I look within and look the stars for the answer.
I see the moon glowing half in light, hiding half in darkness.
Is it what I see?
Is it from what I touch and taste?
Is it the dreams I dream awake?
Is it from the books I read, the words I see, the stories I immerse myself in?
Or is it in the darkness, guided by light lit at primordial conception?
Or is it as simple as love?
Love, lying in bed holding my wife, or is it in my son's laughter expanding my heart.
Where does the song come from?
Not me.
Who calls forth the rhythm?
Not me.
Who speaks as I listen?
Not I, not I.
I am silent.

Dream #5:00 A.M.

I've spent too many days escaping,
a prison of my own making.
In the blink of an eye, I see,
clutching the keys of clarity.
Once again, I walk thru the open door,
touched by the dawn ascending,
filling me with hope.

Night

Another sleepless night filled with cries.
Buried alive.
Surrounded in darkness.
Don’t worry for me…
At night I dream.

Thankful

Too many thrills, now a handful of pills and I'm getting a little flat footed.

Another day that looks the same but the earth spins fast and half the sand has fallen through the hourglass.

Well rested clean-shaved, smooth skin except aged around the soul. No more bloody eyes out of my mind, awake all night sinking down.

I'm thankful the wild horse I used to ride has been saddled.

My Country 'Tis of Thee

Where do we go from here when we're barely speaking and when we do, we're shouting. Our ears are closed and when we listen it's just noise. I break down every now and then thinking about what once was, when we weren't hurting one another. I pray for reconciliation but wonder if there is anything to build on. We have our memories, but what are they when we're too busy sharping our claws to remember the past. I can't say it's over. I wish for an olive branch or a bridge over this madness. How did we get here? Was it money? Was it pride?

You probably laugh at me because it's really over and I want to hold on, just one more day. We can't separate from one another. We both want to lay down our words and touch our wounds. But we ask about the cost. Who will give up something so that the other can gain something? I search myself and I don't really want to make the first move because I'm vulnerable.

If you reject me where will we go?

Overdose

I didn't see, but when summer transitioned into fall, this year my mood dropped. I noticed this depletion slowly, because the beginning of depression is so subtle.

Depression for me is not feeling sad so much, as it feels like living in molasses.

I texted my doctor and told him the situation and he gave me my medical options. I decided to max out the dosage of an anti-depressant I was already taking. It worked quickly. A week goes by. I have more energy and I forgot that I've increased the medication. I set up a pillbox once a week and take what's inside. Then, I fill it again and give it no more serious thought about what I'm taking. It's automatic. But I begin to have problems with my short-term memory and my focus a week later. I can't recall things that I know. This isn't I can't remember a few things here and there. This is every two or three minutes asking myself what I am doing.

I'm completely bewildered about the situation and honestly think I'm coming down with early dementia or I wonder if there is a tumor in my brain because something is seriously wrong with my mind. In a moment of inspiration the truth comes to me. It's the antidepressant. I Googled side effects and there they are. The medicine can cause confusion and trouble with memory. And I'm relieved because I know what's wrong. Another text to my doctor, I tell him my mood is better, but I'm dropping the dosage to what it was because of the side-effects, which was more than an insignificant side effect.

I'm fine two days later.

Delusion #1

The goal is not to sell books, or make money, or become well read and famous. That is not my motivation for getting out of bed in the morning. The goal is the Kingdom of God, wholeness and peace among all people. It's with this in the forefront that I live out my life. It's constantly on my mind, with the main questions of what do I need to do or don't do and when.

I am seeking the Kingdom of God. And with an assurance that peace is imminent, it draw looks of disbelief. It's to be called delusional. And if I'm delusional…let me entertain the possibility that I'm…it's a beautiful delusion, a time without war, without pain or tears, without fear or scarcity; a time of peace and reconciliation. And I have also to wonder what your delusions look like, since we're all on a sliding scale.

To The Critics

I'm tired of being afraid of what I carry, of being found out, of what I've done, what I've written. I could hide it, as I've done. The only problem is what I've written about, what I discovered…It would be easy to walk away, to never speak of it, never write of it, but it is true
and that's the problem.

Grace for the Damned

This is what happened.
This is what went down.
This is the end that God allowed me to see.
A total closure.
Draw your own conclusions.
I've written many times about being a survivor of childhood sexual violence and the circumstances surrounding the event.
I would, from time to time, wonder if this man was still alive. I would dramatically think, "I wonder if he still breathes the same air I breathe and walks the earth that I walk."
Every once in a while, maybe every few years, I would check the internet to see if I could find anything about him.
I was 15 years sober when my mom called me at work and asked if I knew that he'd died. She accidentally came across his obit looking for something else on the internet.
I checked right away and there it was. He died a few years before. It was a really glowing review. He had a very successful career in law enforcement and was survived by a doting wife.
Reading it didn't bother me. I texted a friend about it and told him I felt okay and then went back to work. I forgot about it for the rest of the day.
On my way home from work, I wondered, "is he burning in hell?" I thought about that. His actions shaped my life. It gave me death, but I was also given life through recovery.
I thought of what people say about hell being eternal, where 500 billion years of torture is a blink of an eye in hell. It goes on forever. And I didn't think that was really just.
I felt like my opinion was being asked on his destination: "If I were you, I would give him a pass."
I would allow him into the Kingdom of God, though he needs a shower, to wash the filth from his soul.
I consented to that because grace isn't just for us happy, shiny people. God's love and mercy have to be larger than any one person's actions.
And so you know what happened, right?
I found out, through luck, if you believe in luck, that his doting wife died less than 24 hours after asking God to give him a pass.
I believe they are together.
That's a true story.
Think what you want.

Across the Universe (Second Sight)

The Joker dances so ridiculously, boastfully telling juvenile jokes so endlessly, to people astray, madly laughing, clapping about their own demise.
All I'm asking for is a sunrise…casting loving people with tears of light raining from welcoming eyes…God, why are you shyly hesitating, procrastinating, putting off what can be today, delaying this inevitability, while so many are fearing, hating, chasing, and racing humanity to an early grave?
Complex, despairing staring problems facing us will be solved by imagination, words and ideas freely flowing from unfettering minds, like whimsical snow falling, fastly frosting sunny winter days.
Ancient aggression has grown old. Fear is by its side, trying to keep its anger alive, pride is barely holding on, desperately dying; the promise of peace unbroken will not be denied.
Evil is bowing down, leering, sneering, no longer steering humanity to rocks and waterfalls.
Shooting through the unknown expanse of Love's universe, cheaply disguised lies are aflame in a fiery hearse, bursting among the waltzing stars…into endless depths of black seas of silence.
With angels looking down, let the trumpet sound and the music play!
The final word on violence didn't come from a politician, pundit, a stockbroker, sanity or normality, but from a logical impossibility, from an eternal hopeful mystery, from love's silent suffering, from a child's remembered dream, from an unbreakable quiet promise, from the scoffer's cool disbelief, from passive pleading prayers, from a quivering shaky faith, from the Father and the Mother's ache…
Never more
Never more
Never more
Now rejoicing
Rejoicing
Infinite rejoicing…
Across the universe.

Imagine

I'm taking you to this moment to imagine peace—there's no blood in the streets or smoke in the air and no one is screaming.

Can you get there?

The rivers are pure and clear. The air is fresh and new. The earth's soil is renewing. The rain is falling hope for the crops. There's a lightness, frivolity within our humanity. Our leaders are guided by love and nothing else except their desire to help the helpless. Racism and all the other isms are banished. We see each other as we are seen through the eyes of our Creator.

Day Tripper

feet skin deep
water cold and clean
rusted cigarettes in the sand
metallic lung
cancer
decomposing in the gasoline of the sun.
golden light waterfalls
drenched to the bone
as I think of coming home
sitting on an empty blooming beach in China.
i can't get too low or too high
and risk another manic ride
while i watch
wild green and orange striped zebras
dancing across the pink swirling sky
as i taste peppermint lemons
quenching my thirst.
panning for gold in a silver mine
what you seek
you don't always find
Ecclesiastes tells me so
thank God you still reap what you sow.
i open my eyes and see a child
with a blue bucket
catching the crayon waterfall
while
i eat a peanut butter jam sandwich
with a side of greens
drinking green tea
while i sit on Buddha's knee
talking about the 27th letter
of the alphabet
because everything is possible.

Her Majesty

lend me your hand she says…
unleash your forgotten youth,
come to the meadow of eternity,
under a sky always blue,
with sunlight that burns away
the shade of mourning.
in a blink of eye go wherever you choose,
leave the earth,
dance on the moon,
spread your wings
and melt into the bluest blue of Neptune,
be a wish upon a star,
come home now,
to a love you never knew.

The Cutting Room Floor

A Billie Holiday Poem

I.

Her heart crushed to sand, her hopes sank and all the wishful plans blew out the window like cremation ashes.
At night, she dreams of him, runs to him, kisses him, but their lips will never touch again.
She strayed from him, he strayed from trust and she doesn't know if they have the pieces to mend the broken bridges between them.
They despise what they did, but before they end, can't forget the life and love they lived.

II.

He dreams of her, drunk for her, lies in bed at night, paralyzed by the pain, bleeding tears from his eyes, wondering, hoping they can forgive.

III.

They think of nothing but one another, feel cliffs of sorrow, and are dying to touch each other.
The days precede. The nights come and go. When loneliness comes home, he reaches for the phone, calls, to silence, and he knows not to leave a message.

It was then that he realized that time and distance don't always heal everything.

Daring Greatly (www.cecilpublishing.com)

I had a secret or two.

I started seeing a therapist in January 2015 because, as I mentioned, I had some secrets that I wanted to share. I needed someone who I deemed safe, someone who hopefully would not judge me and whom I not have to see in the normal course of my life. When we first met, I told her that I was seeking God. She said that no one had come to her for that. I remember that I also brought her my books and a collection of poems titled *Divinity*.

She was very patient. I didn't confess right away. She thought I was wanting to resolve some type of trauma. She used EMDR and afterwards seemed to know that I wasn't there for that. She asked me to write what she called "My Truth." I've never been fond of the expression, but I knew what she meant. That writing became "The Message." I went to her office one night and was extremely nervous. After I read it there was a silence. The sun was coming in through her windows and I could hear the birds chirping and it was a special moment. And this therapist believed me and she said that she was honored to hear it. She may have been practicing unconditional positive regard, but she seemed sincere. We talked and I told her that I would like to share it with my parents. She asked me why.

I responded that this is who I am and that I feel like I'm living a lie by hiding. Ultimately, I wanted to share it with them because I thought that it was necessary for the Kingdom of God. She understood.

So on a Saturday I told my parents that I wanted to meet with them. I met my mom in the morning and with my dad in the afternoon. Their response seemed guarded. But how are they or anyone supposed to act after hearing "The Message?

I had some poems and eventually put a manuscript together. I read and edited, read and edited. I decided to publish this work, titled *The Song of the Spirit*. I did not have much input from others into the content or editing of the book. When published I ordered some books and sent them to ministers throughout the country. I sent around 120 packages. I did not give them to family and friends right away. Time passed and I sent copies to close family. Maybe 10, no more than 15 people received *The Song of the Spirit.*

I'm well aware that the content of *The Song of the Spirit* paints me as someone in a serious mental health crisis. I knew that going in, that I would be viewed negatively when I sent those books. No one responded. The people closest to me said nothing. It was devastating. That period, which lasted about two months were the most difficult in my recovery, aside from the first 6 months after getting sober.

I was so vulnerable. I changed some of the 12-step meetings that I was going to, to avoid people. There was one meeting that I went to and someone I gave the book to was there. I left before the meeting ended. I avoided some family functions and withstood awkward moments when I felt shame for writing and believing what I wrote. Besides hiding, which I could only do for so long, I knew what I felt would pass. I also said I will do whatever it takes to overcome fear, even if that means hiding. There is no wrong way leaving hell.

Now, I prepare to go through something similar again by inviting a larger audience to my writings. By doing so, I am opening myself up to be called delusional, to be gawked at. There is a very fine line for me to argue that I am sane, considering that I have bipolar. I'm not free from doubting and also concede that there is a chance that I am wrong. This has been in effort in faith; by definition there are uncertainties. I am risking my name and reputation, which by doing so, lends credibility to what I am saying. I'm willing to pay the cost. By sharing openly, by inviting people to my writings, I may lose my job or because of the tension that I would bring at work, will have to quit. I will likely alienate myself from family. I'll be an outsider and will certainly need some distance for a little while. That's what's on the table.

So you have to wonder why I am doing this, with so much to lose and gains unknown. Please also consider that I have been working for peace for 19 years and there has been little success in terms of book sales or speaking engagements. My primary measurement of success is the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, which has not happened. So, my endeavors have hardly been successful.

I'm doing this because I believe. But more than that, because of my experiences with God, which help me endure the feelings of fear and uncertainty I experience. It is really that simple. And I believe that no matter what comes will be for the best; for humanity. I believe in my union I've made with God and trust that nothing will touch me unless it is allowed.

I might taste failure and alienation, but I will not die from the poison of regret. I will not look back on my life and question how I spent my time or where I gave my energy. I may not get the outcome I want, but it won't be because of lack of effort or will. My heart desires peace and I'll always be restless unless I do what I can to achieve this.

Wishing you the very best,
Your faithful and obedient servant.
Eric Cecil

The End