

April 24, 2025
8:15PM

To my Friend,

Much time has passed since I received your letters. Please don't hold it against me. I had a lot of work in front of me, then severe disturbances and many subsequent collapses. Above all my primary delay in responding to you was that I was not able to pin down any words.

In a letter dated April 23, 2020 you declared, "there is no way other than to say it." I was touched by your simplicity and bravery. You do not hesitate to speak with immediacy. Much like Louise Bentley in *Winesburg, Ohio*, when she slips a note under her crush's door that reads, "I want someone to love me and I want to love someone." A few words on a piece of paper which lay proudly, almost inviting the potential for serious annihilation. There is absolute freedom in allowing yourself that possibility. Like when you brought homemade chocolate cookies to my window sill even though we were still strangers.

Within the same letter you write "my friendship for you is sincere and remains true despite this subplot — please do not forget this. The rest can be overcome." I remember one morning in the front seat of my Father's blue marine truck he asked me how I had spent the previous night with my Mother. My bed time at my Father's house was 10PM but I had stayed up with my Mother much later to watch the season finale of *Survivor*. Unable to conceive of an appropriate answer which would satisfy two conflicting ideas my eyes gave up and I began my *lacrimosa*.

That's how I learnt to ditch. Running away like an abused dog into the ancient forest behind my Uncle's canola farm. I thought I deserved that freedom. I thought I was keeping people safe by taking off. That isolation is all I ever understood. I felt betrayed by the silence of a world that is entirely incomplete. And I'd putz around the rotting birches hoping that despite my ugliness someone might want me back. And that someone might understand why I was gone in the first place.

Only now have I arrived at a place where the consequences of ambivalence and silence are far more painful than any results brought forth from being direct and honest. I have our friendship to thank for that. Of course there will always be pain and disappointment. I am lifelong companions with destruction. I've heard you sob through the phone. In these moments there isn't much to say. I know the grass blades you mention. A dream dies when we realize there is no answer. An assassination.

My friend wrote in a self-published chapbook about his life-long suicidal musings, “The only great thing I have accomplished in my life is that truly great people have loved me. I feel however my ability to love them back has been mediocre at best.” As if there was another love other than his own. As if he could offer some better, more complete love. No such thing exists. But he loved me when he gave me a room in his home when I was at the bottom. And he loved me again when he spent two days preparing chestnuts for braised chicken. And again when he slapped me on the wrist for all my incessant self-centered moping.

Since then I’ve heard this requiem everywhere; Charlie’s smile at the end of *City Lights* or the soundless guests in Akerman’s, *Hotel Monterey*. But there are no silent films.

I felt that it took little for you to understand all of this. Nearly a year later you wrote me on April 1st, 2021 in a birthday letter, “What is there to say? You already know it all.” Certainly I don’t know much of anything. Yet my trust is not predicated on having all the facts. I choose to believe in you. And everything flows from that. In that same letter you write, “I never find judgment or worry. I always find acceptance and encouragement in ways that make me feel already whole instead of seeking completion or validation.”

What joy I’ve found in limping along together like the wounded soldiers in Giazotto’s, *Adagio in G minor*. Drunk off the concession that we cannot have every detail in this world. And we never will. Without you I would have never come to accept this kind of love. I hope you will forgive me for taking so long.

Yours Always,
Nathan Donovan