

A Simple Life

Writing & Photography
by Jerry Katz



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To innocents,
From innocence.

If there's one thing I wish I had been taught as a kid, it's not about money or relationships or family or how to be successful or even what it means to be a good person.

Instead, it's that nothing lasts and everything changes and that the sooner I come to peace with that, the happier I will be throughout life.



(Photograph of the author by Mary-Jean Doyle)

I'm more a cloud in the sky than a farmer in the field.



I'm here. I write in the first person. There's no shelter here.



I can go around saying, "There's no me."

Or I can claim, "There IS a me."

When the energy of both statements has died, what remains has nothing to do with either one.



"Since I have no destination, I can never be lost."

- Andrew Macnab

Never lost, never arriving.



The span of my life is a road trip to indefinite places for an indefinite time.



A baptism is always happening,
washing away sins, sadness and suffering.
I am always being initiated into life.



(Photograph of the author by Mande Labelle)

Sometimes I stare at a blank page.
Sometimes at the clouds.



I have neither an elegant nor a simple life but an elegantly simple life.



3:19 am

seen from a third-floor window

a sleeping crow



I am the one alone with sunrise.



Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field.

- Rumi.

In the near distance, the field curves to the left, goes between summer trees and leads somewhere.

My sense is, "I want to be in the field. I want to follow the curve in the field to ... where?"



The sense of belonging is everywhere, for there is only the "True I."
Yet I look for a scene especially powerful in communicating the
sense of belonging. That is how I touch the belly of beauty.



Some pretend to be enlightened and speak as an enlightened one.

Some pretend to be suffering and speak as one suffering.

Some pretend to speak as both enlightened and suffering at the same time.

Some pretend to speak poetically and meaningfully.

Cherry blossoms in Nova Scotia.



When your shadow side looks like a character from the Peanuts cartoon strip, how bad can it be?



Am I broken or falling apart?



I don't let vampires of the mainstream suck my happiness. I drive stakes through their hearts. I follow what remains: It is only everything.



I am like seaweed. Cast out of gray turbulence, lying perfectly on the beach, full of the symbols of my journey: The tulips, the chicken bones, and the five pearls.

I glisten for the one who chances to walk by and notice before I am swept back into the wavy dark.



Detail of seaweed tulips and pearls.



The sun opens my eyes.
The clouds ease my mind.
The silent and inviting terrain.



You gotta bend toward something: A job, a partner, a church or club, technology, living spaces, a community, the economy.

That's why it's nice to live where you have four seasons. Because then you're bending to the best thing of all: Nature.

So to enhance happiness, maximize the bendings toward nature and minimize all the others.



Four Lines

Victoria Svoboda inquired, "If I am a wave on the ocean, doesn't the wave has some temporary merit?"

Yes, according to the Diamond Sutra, "A mass of merit, immeasurable, innumerable, and incomprehensible."

However...

"Subhuti, if there be a good man or a good woman who gives away his or her lives as many as the sands of the Ganga, his or her merit thus gained does not exceed that of one who, holding even one short verse of four lines from this sutra, preaches them for others."

It could be said that the whole ocean is like the Diamond Sutra. A single wave is like a verse of four lines from it:



Nikola Tesla said, "The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena, it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries of its existence."

To complete Tesla's vision, maybe each scientist, each human, and mainly I myself could consider meditating on this:

The day I begin to attend to awareness, I shall make more progress in understanding my true nature within two years than in all the previous decades of my life.



Find the connection to the creative source and pulse. It's the ocean in which you fish. The line you cast is attention.

Attention to what? Attention to the inclinations of attention. Who notices where attention wanders, drifts and lands?

Who writes a luminous passage or raps an indelible verse? This is who: That creative source, that pulse, that ocean.



My life flows between two extremes. At one extreme, I'm reading the news of the day. At the other extreme, I am where there is no news ever.



When I discarded all the spiritual bells and whistles, nothing spiritual remained.



The holidays are a picnic table I've forgotten about.



Sometimes I photograph people in the distance.
Sometimes freighter ships in the distance.
Because distance is airy and blue.





I kneeled before religious symbols and prayed for inner peace.
I kneeled before ATM machines and prayed for \$500.
I kneeled here and kneeled there
for nothing
until God threw me to my knees.
I was astonished and silenced.



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I wanted to photograph only the shadow
I pushed the flower aside
the shadow moved with it