



On The Rise, I Guess

By Damien Stednitz



This book is dedicated to Jayme Stednitz.
Thanks for all the support, good advice and inspiration.
You're the best friend a boy could ask for.

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on the rise, I guess

I am coming home from work
on the 134
slowly
dazing into the taillights in front of me
an unlikely rain drizzling down
past my windshield
the drops progress down the glass
faster than my own

My tie is off, my phone in the glove box
I have decided to stop being important
At least for the slow ride home

I am kind of on the rise, I guess
but still stuck in the rain
looking at a high-rise apartment that is
out of reach
staring at the red lights in front of me

when I see a flash of red on the roof above me
a cape
a man in a blue suit
running
through the rain with a red cape
trailing behind

I crack a small smile as I watch him
run in circles, arms raised
flying through heavens I can't see.
he is laughing madly
I watch as security drags him down
They are very important
But still he laughs, arms outstretched

that night I slept like a child

I dreamt of flying

Pasadena

March 10th, 2005

Newton in Love

I was in high school physics when I learned
why everything dies,
slowly grinds to a halt.
Why the wheel that spins finally slows
to a stop

friction

my teacher explained that perpetual motion
(if only it were possible)
could allow us to achieve all
that humanity strived for:

limitless energy, cars w/o gas,
constant movement and no waste
all good times
utopia
freedom!

but alas.....

friction

friction causes things to wear down
friction is why batteries are replaced
friction keeps things from running endlessly

friction also creates heat, where otherwise there would be none,
friction also gives traction to what would otherwise.....
spin out of control

it may keep all of our
wildest potential from being explored
but it also allows us to stay in one place,
not drift too far, not be lost in the emptiness of space.....

and you love will always be friction to me.

Pasadena

March 10th, 2005

Newton takes a fall (what's wrong with America)

so this guy on TV last night is bitching,
he's a lawyer,
about how his giant house on the hill
is sliding down the hill because of rain
and that he wants to sue the city
because they didn't maintain the hill to
make it rain-proof

the man from the city points out that
it's really not the rain or the hill
it's gravity
so they go and decide to sue Jesus

at the pre-trial hearing Jesus explains
gravity has just always been there and that
it's nothing he created
to which the prosecution asks the TV viewing public
“well who failed to bring this deadly gravity to our attention?”
and a 4th grader in Willmington, Delaware was the lucky winner
his email contained the correct answer: Sir Isaac Newton

so they get poor Sir Isaac and charge him
because he failed to report the dangers of gravity
Sugar Ray from access Hollywood interviews him from
the courtroom

Newton, being dead for hundreds of years, is clearly
dumbfounded by the amount of media exposure the case generates
and how much trouble he now finds himself in

Of course by this point, the case is now a federal issue
and Mark Burnett is turning it into a reality show where people
vote and giant apples fall on other people.

But, it was about the point that Bush declared war on gravity
apparently gravity had been involved in numerous falls throughout
the country,
that Newton fully grasped the severity of this issue:
In America sometimes the action creates a reaction that makes no
sense at all

Missiles were fired
Newton pleaded
Jesus wept
and I rolled my eyes

Pasadena, CA

March 10th, 2005

BENJI TAKES A DIVE

I'm 26 years old in 2003
this means a lot of things:
I know where all the warp zones
are in Super Mario Brothers,
I've practiced my karate kid kick
at least a hundred times and
I think the Phantom Menace
sucks.

It also means that when it comes
to famous dogs Benji blows
Wishbone and the Pets.com sock
out of the damn water.

So when I was at the Burbank
Animal Shelter on a sales call
and read the plaque that this was where
Benji was adopted from you can
imagine my excitement. Seeing his
paws immortalized in the cement out
front was a solemn moment.

I still remember the brilliant 1983
special "Benji Takes a Dive" where
Benji actually scuba dived. I still use
his fateful swim as a reason why my
wife should get into the wetsuit.
"C'mon dear, even Benji has done it."

I'm excited to know that someday, if I
work hard enough and can actually afford
a house in California and my future dog gets
out from the front yard and gets picked up by
the future dog catcher that he, my dog not the
dog catcher, could actually spend a night in
the same cage Benji did and he too could
aspire to greater things.

BURBANK September 8th, 2003

BOW WOW WOW

In Burbank you're constantly on celebrity watch
I blame Jay Leno
A successful day is judged not by accomplishments
but by brushes with beautiful people

my wife saw Cate Blanchett coming out of
Bob's Big Boy and actually spoke to
Ian something from 90210 while they were both
getting a smog check done on their respective cars

I was starting to think myself a failure

But then, last Tuesday I saw the Wolfman at Chick-a-Roo-Roo

I don't mean Wolfman Jack
I mean the Wolf "kill me with a silver bullet" man

He was eating a chicken sandwich
sloppily
I thought about asking him for
an autograph or a picture
but I didn't have my camera
and I hate when people bother me when
I'm eating

SANTA MONICA

August 23rd, 2003

Eva Longoria

In the Midwest
There's a lot of focus on degrees
Not diplomas, but degrees
of Fahrenheit
You see in my hometown
There's this fast food place
That throughout January
Whatever the temperature is
That's how much a burger costs
When it's five below it's like madri gras
The whole town turns out and
No one notices that it's 2.49 for a soda
Because all anyone cares about is that you get paid a nickel
To eat a burger
It may sound like a silly image, a bunch of
Nebraskans in snow gear eating burgers, but it's the truth

In Los Angeles
There's a lot of focus on degrees
Not diplomas, but degrees
Of Separation
How far are you separated from the industry
Me, I'm ahead of the curve
I've been here two years and I'm well past
The standard six degrees
I'm a one degree black belt of LA
I know a girl who's downstairs neighbor is
Carlos from Desperate Housewives
I've got to get her to introduce me
Just so I can buy him a beer or give him a hi-five, I mean
Even if the only time you make out with Eva Longoria is when
you're acting
It still counts
Remember, in a valley this shallow it's not the truth that matters
It's the image

Sunland

February 26, 2006

Teri Hatcher

Teri Hatcher and Dean Cain
Almost killed me as a young boy

I was mesmerized by the Adventures of Lois & Clark
And Superman replaced Indiana Jones as
My ultimate career aspiration
A red blanket mysteriously ended up with
A head shaped hole cut in one end
Which conveniently made an excellent cape for me

And it became normal to wear my underoos on the outside
Of my pajamas, Superman style

Dean and Teri's evil plan came to fruition
While my dad mowed the lawn

I watched him from the Justice League tower
Which looked a lot like Indiana Jones's Temple of Doom
Which looked a lot like my crudely built tree-house
Which looked a lot like a board nailed to the fork in our oak tree
That was just big enough for me to sit on

For whatever reason that day
My 8 year old brain reasoned that surely
Superman was needed in the neighbors yard
And how does Superman get any where?

He flies

I leaped from the tree, arms out stretched
Only to have my cape catch on a branch as I fell
My cape quickly became the kryptonite that would
Choke me to death, Lex Luthor couldn't have
Planned a more ironic demise

I remember hanging
Pressure building in my eyes
I could see my father yelling, but couldn't hear him
Could see him leaping over the mower in a single bound
running across the yard to me faster than a locomotive
In the final seconds before he reached me
My oxygen starved brain did something funny

I saw my father, as Superman
Coming to save me, the S glowing bright
His cape trailing brilliantly behind him
I knew he'd get to me in time
Superman always did

It wasn't until 20 years later that I realized
I wasn't hallucinating as I hung from that tree
Close to death I saw my father as he truly is
My hero

I should tell him that

Fresno

March 2, 2006

Collect

A hooker asked me for change today
so she could make a phone call
all I had was a dime
which I gave her.
For a dime I got
a “thanks babe”
and a wink.
I’m glad I didn’t tell her
about the \$20 in my pocket.

SANTA MONICA

August 23rd, 2003

NYC

So I'm on the East Coast
And I'm in a cab
That's crawling through the
Congested artery of the city
When we creep by a cemetery
And the tombstones are closer
Together than any I have
Ever seen
Some are taller than others,
But they're packed in so close
It makes its own morbid skyline
Of three foot high sky scrapers

People are born into this crowded
city and even when they die

They're shoulder to shoulder

New York City July 2005

cracker

so I'm grilling with Jayme
it's Memorial Day
when a parrot
an honest to God parrot
lands on our patio
it says Hello to which
Jayme and I reply a confused
Hello
it bobs its head, looks at the steaks
bobs its head again and sings a little tune
it stares at us for one or two more beats
and then says
"Well, gotta go"
and flies / hops on down the street
We both watch until it turns the corner and heads down Marengo
Jayme whispers
"Pasadena is so damn weird"
I burn two of the cheese dogs

three days later there is a flyer taped to our door
with a number to call if we've seen "Hoppy" the Parrot
I almost call but then I don't

it feels like if I did, I'd be selling out a friend

Pasadena

June 2nd, 2005

soundtrack of her

I was at a thrift store in Santa Barbara
on the Sunday before Memorial Day
buying a bunch of shit I didn't need
when I found all their records
in a Rubbermaid bin underneath boots and sandals
all the usual, undeserving suspects were there:
Bob, Marvin, Huey, Neil and Neil
plus many deserving candidates:
Perry, Laurence, the Beach Boys

It was like utopia, or communism
everyone was a dime regardless of condition
social impact, or musical worth

I flipped through the bin, occasionally smiling
and I realized if I had a thrift store,
I'd put all the records on the wall,
album cover wall paper floor to ceiling,

because you never know which album
was the soundtrack to that summer
that summer with that girl
that girl that got away

people would pay a lot of dimes for that record
so they could let it spin and for a moment

it'd be like she stayed

Pasadena June 2nd, 2005

Untitled (for Jayme)

a honey hued moon hung in the hollow
black sky
the moisture of the tropical air clung to us
like a lover
the sea caressed our bare feet
and its music made us dance
laughter hung in the trees
and your angel smile burned, girl, burned
through the night

life stood ugly and unfair outside of the night
waiting for us
but for that remembered moment
it let us be

Omaha

June 11, 1996

Song 2

This is not the beginning
This is not the end
This is not location / destination / formation
Or cohabitation
This is not the sunflower seed stop
At the gas station

This is on the fly
This is work in progress
This is go as is, come as you are

This is the moment my foot slips from the gas, slightly
My ears don't hear the radio song
My eyes don't watch the road long
My mind doesn't focus on what's ahead, nightly

I AM FOCUSED ON YOU

The sun has gotten caught dancing with your hair
Again, your smile fills out the song you sing
Along with without knowing the words

And it's this moment, this time
This place, this now
It's this moment and moments like this
A thousand times over
That make me know
That this ride isn't about arrival
Or distance over time.....

This ride is about having a long,
Wonderful trip,
With you

Lubbock TX

June 25th, 2001

My Time Machine

If I had a time machine
I'd buy you a dozen roses in March
And then go back and give them to you
On valentine's day

I'd save like 40 bucks
And still be the romantic that
I always thought I could be

Pasadena March 5th, 2005