

## **I Went Hectic**

I'm so disconnected. In 2022, I went hectic. Revelations in a dream— Now the mundane ain't what it seems.

Yeah, I got pride. When I arrived in the village, I slaughtered the goat and wore the hide.

Summon Dionysus just so I can laugh Right in the face of chaos, As Jesus fills fishes in my raft.

You might think that I've lost, But I've only just begun. That's why every morning, You'll catch me walking towards the sun.

## **Why Philadelphia Is the Best**

I remember when I came home from my trip to Hanoi, Vietnam in 2022. I started walking around the city, looking at all the beautiful architecture, and thought to myself: is this not the greatest city in the United States? I started thinking like I was an ancient Spartan or a Roman warrior, imagining the streets of Philadelphia as another Athens. It felt far more beautiful and empowering to walk the same familiar blocks, treating my city like paradise.

When I gaze up at City Hall's grand structure—the columns, the ornamentation, the sculptures, and the sheer size of the largest municipal building in the country—I think, damn, this is amazing. You walk down Broad Street and there's our own miniature Pantheon, like you're walking through ancient Rome. Everything here is magnificent: the art, the architecture, the history. We have two rivers, an actual forest, 10,000 acres of parkland, and a beautifully laid-out grid system that makes street photography effortless.

This lifestyle is perfect for someone like me, someone who hates driving and just wants to be mobile. I've never owned a car in my life. I've probably driven only a handful of times. And I've never needed to. In the city, you walk everywhere—just

like the ancients. Imagine the alternative: living in the suburbs, stuck in traffic, commuting, staring at brake lights. It's enough to make you miserable.

Just yesterday, I sat at my desktop for hours working on the Ricoh GR guide. Indoors. Staring at a screen. It brought back memories of high school, being forced to sit still and do busywork. The only difference is, I actually care about this. But even so, it drained me. We aren't made to sit. We have legs, spines, movement. I really believe humans are meant to move—every day, all year, for our entire lives.

Was it worth it? Yeah. I learned a lot. That was the point. I wanted to create something compact and downloadable—20 MB, fits in your phone, filled with images, videos, and thoughts that might help someone else create.

## **A Student of the Game**

I made the guide because I was talking to a local photographer whose friend had just gotten into street photography. He showed him my one-hour 20 minute Ricoh GR masterclass video. His friend—who had never taken a picture before—sent back an image that looked better than most beginner work I've ever seen. That got me excited. I wanted to make a proper companion PDF to that video.

I still believe video is the best way to share knowledge. Better than text. Better than static images. Audio, visuals—it just hits differently. That's why I've started writing these morning essays. They're just exercises. I speak them out loud with voice dictation on my iPhone. Speaking helps me learn. It helps me think.

This is the goal: to be a student forever. To learn always. That's what happens when someone falls in love with street photography. At first, it's the rush—the dopamine from making pictures. You get one good frame and you're hooked. But after a while, when the results aren't coming, the burnout creeps in. Still, burnout is mindset. And that's where this all shifts.

## **Child's Mind**

Wake up each morning like it's your birthday. A child doesn't need to be forced onto the playground. They run there. But adults? We wake to alarms. We drag ourselves through rituals, traffic, work. We force ourselves to play. That's not it.

As artists, our work should come voluntarily. Street photography shouldn't feel like a burden. It should feel like play. The world is your playground. You're a big kid with a camera. When you approach your craft like that—lighthearted and curious—you'll find meaning, results, and joy.

## **How Black and White Helped Me Transcend**

I shot color photography for seven years, traveling across the globe, documenting life as it is. But in 2022, I began to shoot high-contrast black and white. That changed everything.

I started to see the world differently. I focused on macro details—textures, botanicals, open landscapes, the sky and clouds. I returned to the essence of photography: light.

Photography means “drawing with light.”

With black and white, I push the contrast to the max. It becomes pure sketching. I abstract reality. I create something new. Each photo is no longer just what I saw—it's what I *didn't* see. Black and white opened up infinite novelty, even in the mundane.

That's how I know I'm transcending as a photographer. I'm not just documenting the world—I'm reshaping it. I'm making my own world. Every day is beautiful again. Every image is a world unto itself.

## **Bound by Gravity**

I've been working in horticulture in the park for the past year. It brings me joy. Why? Because I move. I bend, trim, plant, lift, climb. My whole body is active. My mind is focused. I'm alive. I'm in Eden.

When you move and connect with the soil, it's like returning home. And this 27-acre park? That's my canvas. My playground. My open-air studio.

In the morning, I walk and pray. I remind myself: I am bound by gravity. I cut. I bleed. I feel greed and lust. I am imperfect—and that's what makes me divine. My mortality draws me closer to God. When I follow my conscience, walk the narrow path, and live with discipline, I become free.

Free like a bird. No fear. No worry. Just flight.

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## **Anxiety Is a Disease**

I don't watch the news anymore. I don't consume media—no YouTube, no TV, no endless scrolling. Why? Because anxiety is a disease, and media is the breeding ground. I only find out what's happening in the world when I leave my apartment and overhear people talking. The other day, I got in the elevator and told a neighbor how I'd been working in the park. She looked at me and said, "Well, I'm glad you didn't get shot." I said, "What?" Apparently, there was some shooting nearby. And I thought—what a way to start the day. I was just going out to catch the sunrise.

I can't imagine living in that kind of fear every day. It's slavery of the mind. That's why I stay unplugged. Even yesterday, after I finished working on my PDF, I was walking the trail and ran into another photographer. He was heading to the Pride festival—one of the most vibrant events in the city—and I had no clue it was even happening. I've been so immersed in my own world, I didn't need any of that. No events, no destinations. I'm just floating now—free and light, unburdened. Disconnected. And it all started when I went hectic.

## **I Went Hectic**

At the end of 2021, beginning of 2022, I began semen retention. When you stop releasing your seed, something shifts. The cloud lifts. You feel clarity, drive, purpose. I haven't released in 3–4 years. I feel like Goku going Super Saiyan. I have energy all day, and my mind is razor sharp.

Recently, I went to dinner with a few guys. They were obsessed with the waitress—craving her attention, whispering comments, hoping she'd talk to them. I sat there thinking, *This is the last thing we need right now*. It reminded me of Tyler Durden in the bathtub with a cigarette. When you stop needing that kind of validation—when you stop chasing sexual gratification—you realize how shallow it all is. A fraction of a second of dopamine. I get the same rush from making a photograph.

It's hard to stop lusting entirely—let's be real—but just imagine: every time you release, you're draining your battery to 0%. All that stored potential energy inside you now lies wasted. And once you retain it long enough, you start to *sense* who doesn't. It's subtle, but it's there. You feel their energy—restless, uncontained, lost.

## **The Love of Beauty Itself**

Last year I read Plato's *Symposium*. They talked about different genders—male, female, and the combination of both. That alone shows you: identity discourse has always existed. Gay, bi, trans—none of this is new. It's been around since ancient times. Let people live.

But what struck me most was their discussion of love—specifically the ladder of love. It starts with Eros: physical desire, lust, wanting something from another person. But it climbs toward Agape: divine love. The love of another's soul. Then the love of all beauty. Until finally, you reach the love of beauty itself.

I think of the villages in Zambia. The well and the church were the center of life. They gave both physical and spiritual nourishment. But building a well isn't easy. You dig and dig until you tap into the source. Once you hit it, the water flows endlessly. That's what divine love is like—overflowing.

And like the altar where Jesus was crucified, it reminds you of sacrifice. The villagers sacrifice too—hauling bricks, building homes, raising children, cooking meals. Everyone gives. And because they're tapped into that eternal source, they receive. To connect to God is to live in sacrifice. To strive. To overflow.

But maybe we can never fully reach Agape. God is Agape. We are not. Still, by following the narrow path, we strive toward it—like children. Falling. Rising. Learning. Loving, not because we want anything, but because beauty itself deserves love.

### **Nobody Cares About You**

One of the most freeing realizations you can have is this: **nobody cares about you.** And that's a good thing.

It sounds harsh, but it liberates you from the need for approval. You stop seeking validation. You focus on strength—on health, on discipline, on your connection with God. The opinions of others fall away.

Sure, it's natural to want affection. We're social creatures. But when you realize that, in the end, most people are too wrapped up in themselves to really care—you can finally live. You can finally create. Maybe this is just America. Maybe it's Philly. But here, it's every man for himself. That's why it helps to remember: nobody cares. And that means you're free.

### **Zest for Life**

When I wake up after deep sleep, hydrated, feeling strong, and I see the first light of sunrise—I leap into the day. I let the sun hit my eyes. I walk back to that cliff over the river and I feel the infinite potential of this open world. The world calls to me. It hums with life.

There's so much to do, so much to see, so much to explore. And all of it is worth photographing. The abundance of the world pours through me like the waterfall I gaze toward every morning. That thought—that feeling—is what fuels my love for life.

### **The Smile Is a Deep Sense of Knowing**

For the past few months, I've been practicing Ashtanga yoga. It's rigorous. Upside-down lotus poses, backbends into planks—it pushes your body beyond what you think is possible. But at the end of the practice, you lie down in Shavasana. Just flat on your back, like a starfish. Total stillness. Complete release.

And in that moment, something happens. Energy travels through your spine. Your body resets. You feel whole again. It's more powerful than any workout.

Every time I lie there, I smile. Not because I'm thinking of anything. Not because someone told me to. It just happens. It's like God is hugging you. It's not belief. It's knowing. And that smile is the knowing.

Not belief in a church, a priest, a book. A direct connection. A divine touch that reminds you—He's real.

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### **Striving for Agape Is the New Goal**

What does Agape look like, and why does it matter? I think Agape looks like greeting your neighbors warmly, bringing love to the table wherever you go. One of my favorite things I've done this year is talking with bus drivers—guys who are open, grounded, present. Sometimes, when I've ridden with one for a while, I'll give them a 4x6 print from my photography archive as a small gift.

Shoutout to D, the best bus driver from Turkey. He came by where I work and toured the greenhouse with me. Such a good dude. He feeds squirrels and told me that driving the bus is like a kind of meditation for him. We talked about how repeating the word “peace” in Arabic—*Halim*—rewires his brain through neural plasticity. That idea stuck with me. I started bringing it into my street photography. Saying peace—moving with peace—shooting with peace.

### **The City Is a Living Organism**

If Philadelphia is a living being, then City Hall is its heart. The subways and streets are the veins and arteries, pumping blood through the body of the city. That’s why I have so much respect for the people who work public transportation—they are the pulse, keeping the city alive.

When I walk around, I don’t follow a plan. I don’t chase locations. I follow intuition. A left turn instead of a right. A new alley. A different block. These small shifts spark new neural pathways in the brain. That’s brain plasticity. That’s novelty.

And when you start seeing the city like that—alive, interconnected—everything becomes more meaningful. I genuinely believe my body gravitates toward beauty. Every morning, I end up by the river. Maybe that’s because I’m mostly water, and water calls to water. It’s gravity. It’s resonance.

### **The Present Is the Ultimate Gift**

Don’t dwell in the past. Don’t obsess over the future. When I’m photographing—really seeing—I’m outside of time. The present moment becomes the only thing that exists.

That is the gift.

The trees giving you oxygen.

The birds calling to you.

The feeling of the ground beneath your feet.

The freedom to move.  
To breathe.  
To *be*.

## Seeking Eudaimonia

Reading Aristotle's *Ethics* taught me about *eudaimonia*—the highest form of flourishing. A good spirit. A divine guide within. It's not just pleasure or happiness. It's purpose. It's virtue in action.

*eu-* (good) + *daimon* (spirit) → "having a good guiding spirit"

It's the feeling of waking up knowing you are striving toward something worthy. You're disciplining your body, sharpening your mind, nourishing your soul. Discipline itself comes from "disciple"—to be a student. So I stay a student. Always learning—through art, through books, through pain, through prayer.

You don't reach eudaimonia by accident. You work for it. You train for it. You sacrifice for it. You align with the highest version of yourself. And through that, you touch paradise—right here on earth.

## Waking Up with Enthusiasm

The ultimate goal is vitality. To wake up with **enthusiasm**. That word literally means "to be possessed by a god." And that's how I want to feel—like something divine is moving through me.

For three years, I've fasted every day. No food until sunset. And every day, I feel sharper, stronger, more connected. Fasting gives clarity. It empties the gut, clears the mind, and reveals God's voice in the stillness. Your body is a temple. Why fill it with trash?

You don't want to feed your temple with garbage—whether it's in your mouth, your eyes, or your ears. I wait until the sun sets. Then I feast. On grass-fed beef. On the best cuts from cows that spent all day grazing. They chew all day so I don't have to. I don't need to eat like a squirrel. Let the cow do the chewing. I'll just eat the cow.

## Pure Felicity

Right now I'm reading *The City of God* by Saint Augustine. It's surprisingly funny—especially his takes on the pagan gods. There's a god for everything, even *Felicitas*, the goddess of happiness. She was printed on Roman coins.

The Roman god of money? *Pecunia*, from *pecus*—meaning cattle. So maybe we've come full circle. In ancient Rome, wealth was cattle. Today, I buy beef in bulk from Amish farmers in Lancaster. A half cow. Hundreds of pounds in my freezer. That's my vault. That's my bank. That's real wealth.

The dollar? It's just paper. It used to be backed by gold, now it's backed by nothing. People spend it on junk. Junk clothes. Junk food. Junk plastic made in factories to keep people busy. But beef? Salt? Water? That's what matters.

You don't need much. Just meat, salt, and water. Even *salary* comes from *solarium*—money Roman soldiers were paid to buy salt. Salt was survival. I saw it firsthand in Zambia. They used salt to preserve fish without electricity. And now that I box, stretch, and train every day—I take an Epsom salt bath every night. Salt heals.

Time is the real currency. That's why we say *spend time*. *Pay attention*. Design a life that feels like play. Live like a child. If your life is leisure and not labor—if your days are filled with beauty and not burdens—you've won.

And when the money comes, buy beef.  
And when you've got enough beef, buy Bitcoin.  
Store it in a vault.  
And go outside.

You went hectic.  
And now, you're free.

