

EXCERPTS FROM

(EM=) RELATIVITY over The Absurdity of Life

by MJ Perrin

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HUMAN NATURE IS INSIDIOUS  
~~~~~

PROFESSOR

Humans live a life of *daily* absurdities. They are the *nucleus* in the *realm* of absurdism. They *contrive* a meaning or purpose to make their existence necessary. Their animation of reality is an *ever-expanding* tale of grit, fortitude, determination, ingenuity, aspirations, and foresight coinciding with *greedy, aggressive, invasive, unapologetic behavior*, atoned by *moments* of kindness and a touch of *pure* luck, *all* happening at the *same* incongruent time.

The folly that humans have *any* certainty about the purpose of *anything*—especially and particularly, *themselves*, leaps ahead to the question “why”? “Certainty” is an *optimistic* concept that disintegrates at the simplest of whims and doubt.

The *first* Absurdity of Life is *humans* defining *who* they are, relative to a meaningful purpose. The understanding of “who” has been made more complex than it needs to be. Who are you? The answer is really quite simple, but never accepted.

~~~~~  
EXAMPLE OF LIFE THREE: CHOOSE  
~~~~~

RICO

You’ll find *this* company to be *extremely* supportive of Negroes trying to make *something* of themselves. You should do well here if *you* work *hard* and *stay* out of trouble.

ON SCREEN

When integration became “tolerable”, this would be called “tokenism”. Then it became “affirmative action”. Now it’s known as “DEI”, “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion”. But with a bit of creativity, it could also be, “Diversity encouraged intentionally”, or “Diverse enlightenment inspired”. The letters could even be reversed to say, “Include everyone damnit”!

RIGHTEOUS

You won’t hav’da *worry* about me.

RICO

Good. I *need* to ask a few questions before I can *officially* offer you a job. It may be a waste of time, but the *company* doesn't trust that the police *and* the *post* office are always up to date on *who* to avoid. (beat) These are all yes and no questions, so it shouldn't take us long. Are *you* ready?

RIGHTEOUS

Yes.

RICO

Has a therapist ever diagnosed you as having a *so-ci-o-path-tic per-son-al-i-ty disorder*?

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Have you ever been fired, jailed, or *in-sti-tu-tion-nal-ized in a mental hospital* for being a *lez-be-an*?

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Has there *ever* been a *time* when your name *or* face was associated with *anything* having to do with ho-mo-sex-u-al-i-ty?

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Have you ever received *in the mail* material pertaining to ho-mo-sex-u-al-i-ty?

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Have you ever frequented any bars, parks, or beaches where ho-mo-sex-u-als have been *purged*?

ON SCREEN

Segregation today.

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Have you ever been a customer in a bar catering to ho-mo-sex-u-als that is currently open or has been *shut down*?

ON SCREEN

Segregation tomorrow.

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Have you ever been arrested for *cross-dress-ing*?

ON SCREEN

Segregation forever.

RIGHTEOUS

No.

ON SCREEN

George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, 1963

A lighting change disrupts the pattern and alters the atmosphere.

RICO

It's a *good* thing you *live* here in the land of good-and-plenty, don't you think? A good looking niggra girl like you might not fair so well further down the road. You know what I mean, don't you girl?

RIGHTEOUS

Yes sir.

End light special. The interview goes on.

RICO

Last two. Have you ever been called a *lez-be-an*?

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

Have you ever *loved* a woman? *Excluding* your family, of course.

(silence)

Is there a *problem* with you answering *that* question?

RIGHTEOUS

No.

RICO

No, to which? *Loving* a woman or *answering* the question?

RIGHTEOUS

Both.

RICO

I see. That's it. You can *go* now. (pause) A suggestion. You're *more* apt to *get* a job if you don't *hesitate* to say "no" to *loving* women.

Freeze: Slow thaw.

PROFESSOR

Rhinoceros, by Eugene Ionesco, is an absurdist play where the inhabitants of a small town gradually become rhinos. The main character, Berenger, is *alone* in his *defiance*, but he can't help *questioning* his *sanity* and *seeing* himself as *ugly*.

ON SCREEN

The play *exemplifies* the *resilience* needed to *defy* the power of *mass cultural movements* spawning a *mob mentality* that *demands* conformity.

Alien light on RYAN.

Who would you be if *you* had to choose?

A token

A by-product of upside-down discrimination

A ten percent statistic

A ticking bomb?

Alien light out.

~~~~~  
THE AFFECT OF CONFUSION IS UNDERESTIMATED  
~~~~~

The ENSEMBLE rushes to class.

PROFESSOR

All right *people*, settle down. It's time. Your final test. Today's the day you prove *you're* ready to *ascend* upon the world. Don't forget, one-word answers *only*. First one. "*Happiness* is private."

RONDO

Sacrifice.

PROFESSOR

No, no, no. This is *not* a good start, people.

(to Rondo)

I *do* applaud your confidence—though it saddens me it was *wasted* on *erroneous* thinking. (beat)
Who can give me the *right* response?

REA

Hide.

PROFESSOR

Hide, *yes*. Someone give me the prompt *for* "sacrifice".

RYAN

Future happiness.

PROFESSOR

There you go.

(to Rondo)

Use this to remember the difference: "*Hide* your joy *today* so you can live to *sacrifice* it *tomorrow*". Say it.

RONDO

"*Hide* your joy *today* so you can live to *sacrifice* it *tomorrow*."

PROFESSOR

Moving on. "Forced acceptance."

RIGHTEOUS

Hypocritical.

PROFESSOR

Excellent. “Parades and marches.”

RONDO hands go up eagerly.

REA

Inconsiderate.

PROFESSOR

Very good.

(looking at RONDO)

A *bonus* lesson. If you’re going to be *polite* and raise your hand, you must *also* be polite and *wait* to be *called* on, which pretty much *guarantees* that you *won’t* be. Blurting it out indicates *you’re* decisive *despite* being “rude”. *Moving* on. “Special legal protection.”

RYAN

Selfish.

PROFESSOR

Correct. “Civil rights.”

ENSEMBLE

Exclusive!

PROFESSOR

Yep. A dress, heels, & make-up.

RIGHTEOUS

Uniform.

RONDO

Unified.

REA

Undetected.

RONDO

Under-hyphen-control.

PROFESSOR

Nice try, but a hyphen is used to connect *two or more* words that have a *strong* connection or bond. Hence, it fails as a *one-word* answer. But I’ll give you a *bonus* point for trying to be clever. You never *know* what might pass as *right* even when it’s *wrong*. (beat) Okay then. That’s it. You are now, officially, enigmas. Go and make me proud. *Exasperate* the world.

~~~~~  
THE DREAM IS A NIGHTMARE THAT AIN'T GOING NOWHERE.  
~~~~~

Church. The ENSEMBLE. Asterisks
denotes a new preacher.

*I wanna thank you all for coming.
'Cause it's another sad day that brings us together.
One step at a time, we been walking...
...starting with Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King.
Steps he took to the heart of Jim Crow to tell 'em, no more.
And we're still walking...
...down the streets where terror reigns.
But these steps are different.
You know what I'm talking about.
We've all heard 'em.
Those fast steps quicken to a run.
The slow steps dragging to a crawl.
Doesn't matter.
Standing as still as can be...
...arms in the air...
...and still likely to fall.

*The steps.
That never stop moving...
...leading grieving bodies
...towards another grave...
...of a brother, son, friend, husband.
A person who was loved.
It doesn't matter.

Bullets bulldoze through the bone that keeps a man upright.

causing him to lurch to a sudden stop,
the knees to buckle, the arms to drop,
the head to flop forward colliding with earth.

The bullet is louder than the fall
but the screams of a mother,
now one son less,
is loudest of them all.

Witnessed by family and friends who have taken one step after another by her side,
to be sure she's able to say her final good-bye.

So let us pray for the families of those who have passed.
And pray for the madness to stop.

Alien light on RYAN.

When a black man is killed at the hands of a white man, unprovoked, who are you then?
Are you water spilling over
A flower blowing in the wind
A bug squished flat into the ground
Who do you become when the sun goes down and the light is gone, and your eyesight fails you?

Alien light out.

~~~~~  
[READ THE SMALL PRINT: \(families are non-refundable!\)](#)  
~~~~~

RONDO

We all have family.
No one escapes without some scarring—
I think it's a rule.
In my family,

there were three significant people.
My oldest sister, Gwen.
my second oldest sister, Evelyn.
and my mother, Jean.
Conversations with them went like this.

Gwen, *showing concern*: Aren't *you* making life *more* difficult than it *has to be*?

Evelyn, at a *drag* show: He makes a damn good-looking woman!

Gwen, out of curiosity: What do you do with a woman?

Evelyn, after asking that same question: No, don't answer. That's none of my business.

And *then* there was my mother, who asked the *same* damn question. I told her *all* the possibilities because I *thought* she was ready to handle it. After all, she *did* ask. Word to the wise: *just* because your mom asks, doesn't mean she *really* wants to hear it.

My therapist said I did it *on purpose knowing* it would *mess* with my *mother's* head, but I stood by my conviction, saying that was *not* my intention. That was, until I gave it some serious thought and concluded: it *really* is something I would do.

(she snickers, then whacks her hand)

Bad girl. Bad, bad, bad girl. (beat) But then again, she's the primary reason I'm in therapy.

(pats herself on the back)

Way to go. Good job.

~~~~~  
FUCK 'EM  
~~~~~

RYAN

After years of hiding, I have reclaimed all my body parts, and my beliefs, and myself.

I have given back that which did not belong to me, was never mine to lug around, or to own up to, or to be responsible for, or to cry over.

I have thrown away the empty promises and the fake love. I have moved beyond the horrifying memories of the boogiemanager residing in my thoughts. I have escaped the deep dark void consuming all of my being.

I have finally created a sanctuary where bloody family heirlooms are not allowed, and hugs drenched in selfish gratification are banished. I have made a new home and I share it with my chosen family, living as I always should have. Embraced by love that doesn't hurt.

Instead, I live with *pills* that make my *memories* feel *less* real.

~~~~~  
BAD CHOICES IS AKIN TO NO CHOICE  
~~~~~

The ENSEMBLE shouts ilk to being
in a holy-roller church, boisterous.

RONDO

I decided I was gonna find me a wife. I met this one girl, who I thought could rock my world, but then she *said*...

RICO

It's *nothing* personal. I just don't like black people *enough* to get *that* involved with 'em.

RONDO

Just call me Flash. I got away from her super-fast. Then there was this one girl I thought understood where I was coming from, *until* she started telling me...

RIGHTEOUS

I think black *chicks* are exotic. *Not* as much as Latinas or Asians, but that's *understandable* being that you're *not* rare in America. *Still*, I bet I could show you a better time than your *black* girlfriend does. Assuming she *does* at all.

RONDO

Uh, no thank you. (beat) I wasn't in despair yet, 'cause there was this other girl I had just met. It was all good, *until*...

REA

That was *so* racist of her. I can't believe she *said* that to you. I *shoulda* said something. I *wish* I *had* said something. I'm *really* sorry I *didn't* say anything. I'm sorry she *said* that to you.

RONDO

Fuck no! Feeling sorry doesn't set you *free*. I want somebody who got *no* reason to cop a *sad*, *pathetic plea*. So, on I went. (beat) Now, I could be wrong, but it seems to *me* that I do have *brown* skin, don't you see? So *why* am I exempt from *my* kin? Why would *anyone* say to me...

RICO

Don't you *just* hate it when black people *act* like that? Like they don't *give a shit* about anybody else. What *is* their problem?

RONDO

Seriously? How come *none* of them can see how *offensive* they are to me? And *why* must I put up with some *damn* fool, trying to *prove* to me she can relate by saying some *stupid shit* like this...

RIGHTEOUS

I love me some rap. It's the *ultimate* musical statement that says, "*Up yours, motherfucker. To hell with your decency codes*". It's the ultimate *political* statement that says, "*Fuck you man. I don't give a shit about your labels, trying to file me away*". Most people don't *understand* rappers and where they're *coming* from, but I get 'em. They are the ultimate *statement of societies*'—

RICO does DJ hip-hop sounds.

RONDO

Yeah, I get it. (rapping) You're cheap and easy when it comes to rappers' shit. You think that maybe what you're saying is a sure platinum hit. That maybe you and I are a top-bottom fit. // All this time you been thinking I like rap. // I call myself black so you got in yo mind that with me rap is fine. // Hell no. // A fool is what you are when you're thinking like that. // Now listen to me good as I say this to yo face. Fuck that shit, bitch, 'cause that ain't where I'm at.

(end rap)

I'm *over* trying to find a lover. I'm *not* looking any further. Instead, I'll remember the wise *words* of my mother...

REA

What's your rush, girl? You bound to find *someone* who won't *annoy* the *hell* out of you. *Most* of the *time* anyway.

RONDO

You would think.

ON SCREEN

Pop quiz.

People have nothing to do with who they are

People can't change

People have the capability of changing if they truly want to

People are fucked-up and it don't matter what.

~~~~~  
**PARENTHOOD: GET THE BIRTHDAY CAKE OR SCREW**  
~~~~~

RIGHTEOUS

Honey, would you please go get the cake.

RYAN

I'm on my way now.

RIGHTEOUS

Maybe you should buy some more ice cream. Just in case someone's allergic to chocolate and doesn't like vanilla.

RYAN

Strawberry?

RIGHTEOUS

No. No one likes strawberry. Do you ever see a carton of just strawberry?

RYAN

Then what?

RIGHTEOUS

Nothing with nuts. And maybe you should get something lactose free. Just in case.

RYAN

If you keep going the options will be down to none. Problem solved.

RIGHTEOUS

You always think you're funny when you're not. (beat) Just don't make us one of "those parents" who send home a sick kid.

RYAN

I'll do my best. Oh, I need to stop and get screws, too.

RIGHTEOUS

No. You don't have time.

RYAN

Sure I do. I know exactly what I need. I'm in, I'm out.

RIGHTEOUS

You say that, but we both know that's not what will happen.

RYAN

I promise you—

RIGHTEOUS

No! You get the cake, you get the ice cream, and you come straight home.

RYAN

It won't take that long. Besides, no one ever comes on time. Everybody wants to be last.

RIGHTEOUS

Not for a kid's birthday party.

RYAN

So when did we learn to be fashionably late?

RIGHTEOUS

Honey, for *every* kid here, there are parents with *plans*. When their *youngest* child was *conceived*, the *rest* of their children were *at* a birthday party. Trust me, they will be *here* on time.

~~~~~  
CHILDREN HONOR THEIR OBLIGATION  
~~~~~

RYAN

We're out of diapers. Did you remember to—

RIGHTEOUS

Ah shit. No. I forgot. (pause) Sorry.

A long silence.

RYAN

I know you don't wanna talk about this—

RIGHTEOUS

So why bring it up then?

RYAN

Because we *need* to talk about it. This is not a good situation for us.

RIGHTEOUS

You mean not for *you*.

RYAN

I mean for *us*, which is you *and* me.

RIGHTEOUS

Do we really hav'da do this *right* now?

RYAN

The situation isn't getting any better. We hav'da make a change. (pause) It's time we *seriously* consider finding a place that *specializes* in caring for people like her.

RIGHTEOUS

People like, "*her*". My *mother* has Alzheimer's and Crone's Disease. She's not *some* woman infected with a zombie virus that I took in off the street.

RYAN

Not what I meant, and you know it. We have lives. We have kids to take care of. We can't do everything. That's all I'm saying.

RIGHTEOUS

Then we'll hire someone to help out.

RYAN

What sense does that make? For what we would pay a nurse, we could put her in a nice home with 24 / 7 care.

RIGHTEOUS

This is a nice home with 24 / 7 three-hundred-and-sixty-five days of care. And love. That's something she's not going to get anywhere else.

RYAN

She doesn't even recognize you most of the time.

RIGHTEOUS

That's the *illness*, not her. And if you seriously believe you can change my mind about this, well, then you don't know me.

RYAN

All I'm after is a discussion. A real, honest, open discussion about *our* future, which *includes* your mother. But never mind. I'll go get diapers.

RIGHTEOUS

You are coming back, aren't you?

RYAN

Seems like neither one of us knows the other very well, do you?

~~~~~  
LIFE IS FULL OF WISE, BUT IS HABITUALLY IGNORED  
~~~~~

A symphony of percussion sounds. A transition of time passing.

ENSEMBLE

If you move from one spot to another without taking something new with you // then you really haven't moved.

Taking a risk isn't the problem. // Not being smart about *when*, is.

The greatest responsibility you'll always have, are the choices you make.

It took an infinite number of steps to get from where you started to where you are today, taken one step at a time. // Don't underestimate the value of a single step.

Anything in the *universe* that is generally *considered* to be idiot-proof will eventually be *ruined* by (all together) *an* idiot.

Give thanks at least twice a day: One when you get out of bed. // The other when you get back in it.

You live each minute with what you know. You live the next with what you learnt.

This is some *crazy* poop. *Half* the world has *no* clean water. // The *other* half has *so* much that they *shit* in it.

The thing about normal is that *it's* abnormal to *be* normal. No one *wants* to be abnormal, so *no* one can *ever* be normal.

It's okay to be an ass—if you're a donkey. Otherwise, not so good.

I say, let's *celebrate* the endurance of *our* stupidity.

~~~~~  
OUT OF SCREWS AND THE STORE IS CLOSED  
~~~~~

PROFESSOR

You have questions. Go ahead and ask. I should *warn* you, though, answers are *hard* to come by.

RYAN

Am *I* dead?

PROFESSOR

It's possible (pause) that there are dead people walking amongst us, *totally* clueless. You *could* be (pause) sitting on the brink, pondering the possibilities. Maybe death is not *complete* until tomorrow (pause) *never* becomes today.

ENSEMBLE

Who are you now? Do you know?

RYAN

I *don't* care about *who* I am. I care about *life* and *death*.
(said neutrally)

Which is my existence

PROFESSOR

The *arrogance* of humans made possible the mass-production of a *condescending, artificial* interpretation of *existence*.

Man's *ability* to assimilate *knowledge*, to *master* and *control* life and death, has *inflated* their egos.

Most believe the importance they have *assumed* is what makes *their* existence, over others, necessary.

But really, who are *they* for it to matter? Who are *you* for it to matter?

RYAN

Why can't you just tell me?

PROFESSOR

There's this TV show called *Sense 8*. It's about 8 people able to experience and interact with each other regardless of their locale. There's this scene where one of 'em, a gay man, is verbally attacked by a reporter and is asked, "Who are you". And as is their nature, they *all* address the question. Who are you?

ENSEMBLE

Do you mean where I live?
Do you mean who I love?
Do you mean where I come from?
What I do?
What I believe in?

PROFESSOR

And on and on they *could* go, bombarding this reporter with all *types* of questions, searching for clarity. At the end, they perceive themselves as being badass and celebrate. *I* think it's because they found themselves *beyond* existence, but *still*, there was *no* conclusion as to *who* they are?

RYAN

Okay, whatever. Dead or alive?

ENSEMBLE

Who are you?

PROFESSOR

Do you know?

ENSEMBLE

Who the *fuck* are you?!

RYAN

What do you *want* me to say?
That I *am* a mother?
That I'm a lesbian?
A *person* with brown skin?
Or are you asking me who I *became* from *illicit* touches?
From the *kindness* of others.
Is *being* manic-depressive who I've *always* been or *who* I developed into?
Just *tell* me. Am I dead?
Does it matter who I am when I die?

PROFESSOR

To some people, it does.

RYAN

I'm asking *you* to tell me.

PROFESSOR

Life and death is a revolving door with *one* word written at every stop.

RYAN

(neutral)
Dead ... alive

PROFESSOR

(neutral)
Why

ENSEMBLE

What can you say *after* all these years, after *all* your experiences, who are *you* now?

RYAN

I'm me, just as I've *always* been.

ENSEMBLE

Are you sure?

PROFESSOR

What's your name? Is *that* who you are?

RYAN

Dead? Or alive?

PROFESSOR

Life is a series of absurd acts humans *manipulate* to meet their *own* needs, and in *those* acts, lies the truth. We are *trapped* in the labyrinth of asking "why" instead of *accepting* that what is, is, until it *is* not. Who are you? Now?

RYAN

I am *me* just as I've *always* been. I am not a *fragmented* person. My *parts* are not *scattered* about *searching* for an identity. There is *only* the *whole of me*. ... Who am I? I am *this* body called Ryan. I am *not* only a black face when one is needed. Or *simply* a body that is *used* and discarded. Nor am I a *political* indicator because I am a *woman* who *loves* women. *Why* should I accept being *dismembered* to ease the efforts of *others* to know and to accept *me*? The *whole of me*. Am I dead or alive?

PROFESSOR

You *could* (pause) find yourself with the love of your life. Or back *home* doing repairs.

RYAN

Are you saying I *have* a choice?

PROFESSOR

I'm saying there are *possibilities* and attached to them are infinite choices.

THE ABSURDITY OF LIFE CONTINUES, BUT THIS STOPS HERE!