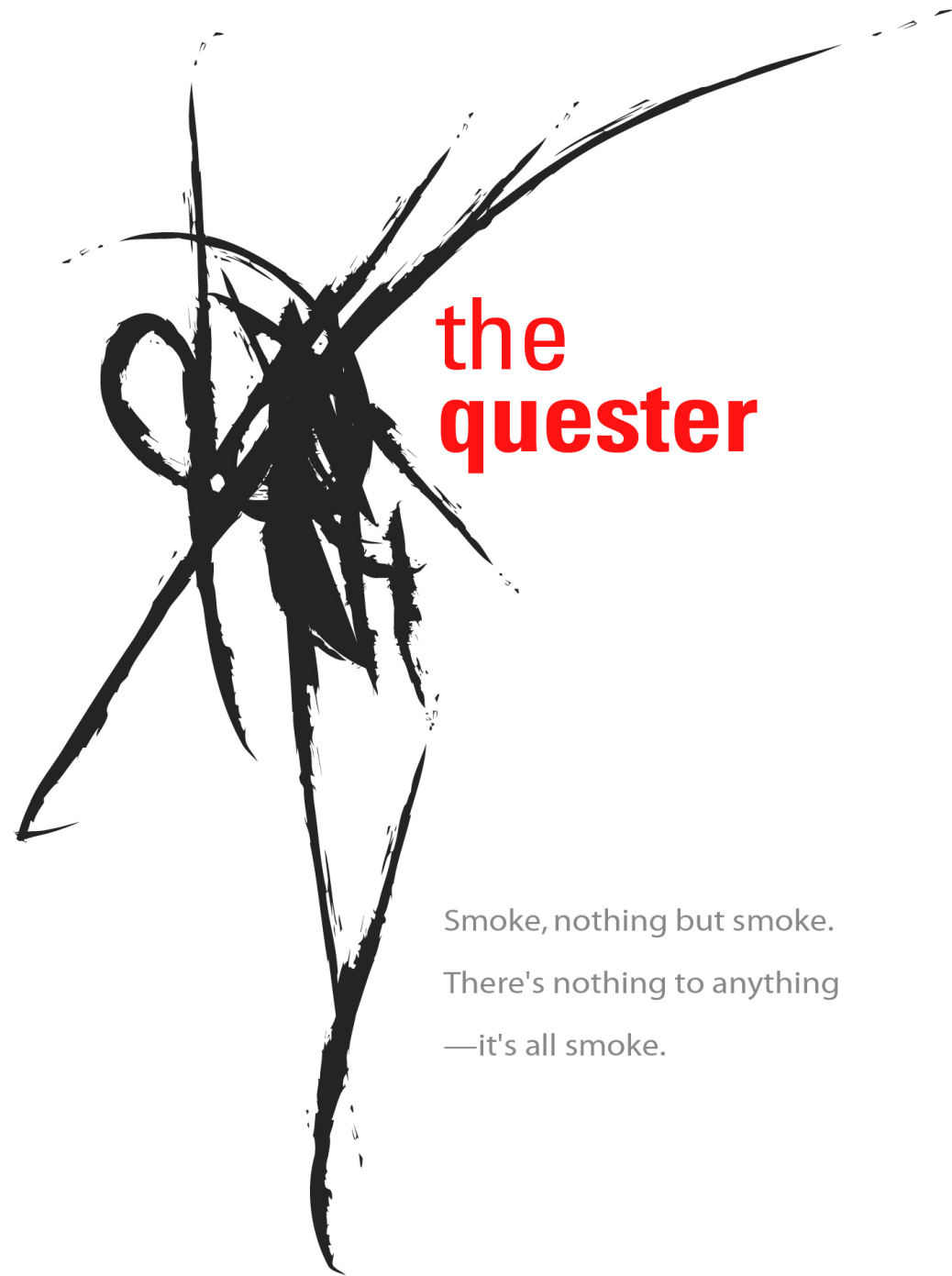




designed by cristina mejia [memoryflik.com]



the **quester**



the
quester

Smoke, nothing but smoke.

There's nothing to anything

—it's all smoke.



I've Seen It All

1.12-14 Call me "the Quester."

I've been king over Israel in Jerusalem.


I looked most carefully into everything, searched out all that is done on this earth.

And let me tell you, there's not much to write home about. God hasn't made it easy for us.


I've seen it all and it's nothing but smoke—smoke, and spitting into the wind.

1.15 Life's a corkscrew that can't be straightened,

A minus that won't add up.

A solid red square in the upper right quadrant. Inside the square, there is a white silhouette of a hand with fingers slightly curled, as if holding something or gesturing.

All the rivers flow into the sea,
but the sea never fills up.
The rivers keep flowing to the same old place,
and then start all over and do it again.

A solid red square in the lower right quadrant, identical to the one above. It also contains a white silhouette of a hand with fingers slightly curled, identical to the one above.

Nobody remembers what happened yesterday.

And the things that will happen tomorrow?

Nobody'll remember them either.

Don't count on being remembered.

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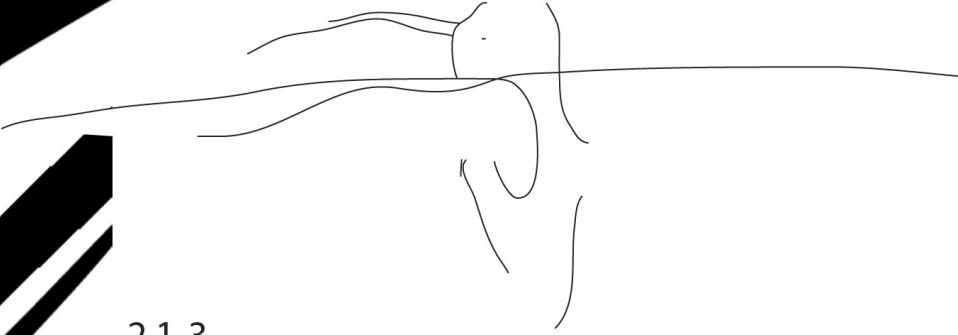
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1.18
Much learning earns you much trouble.
The more you know, the more you hurt.



2.1-3

I said to myself,

"Let's go for it—experiment with pleasure, have a good time!"

But there was nothing to it, nothing but smoke.

With the help of a bottle of wine

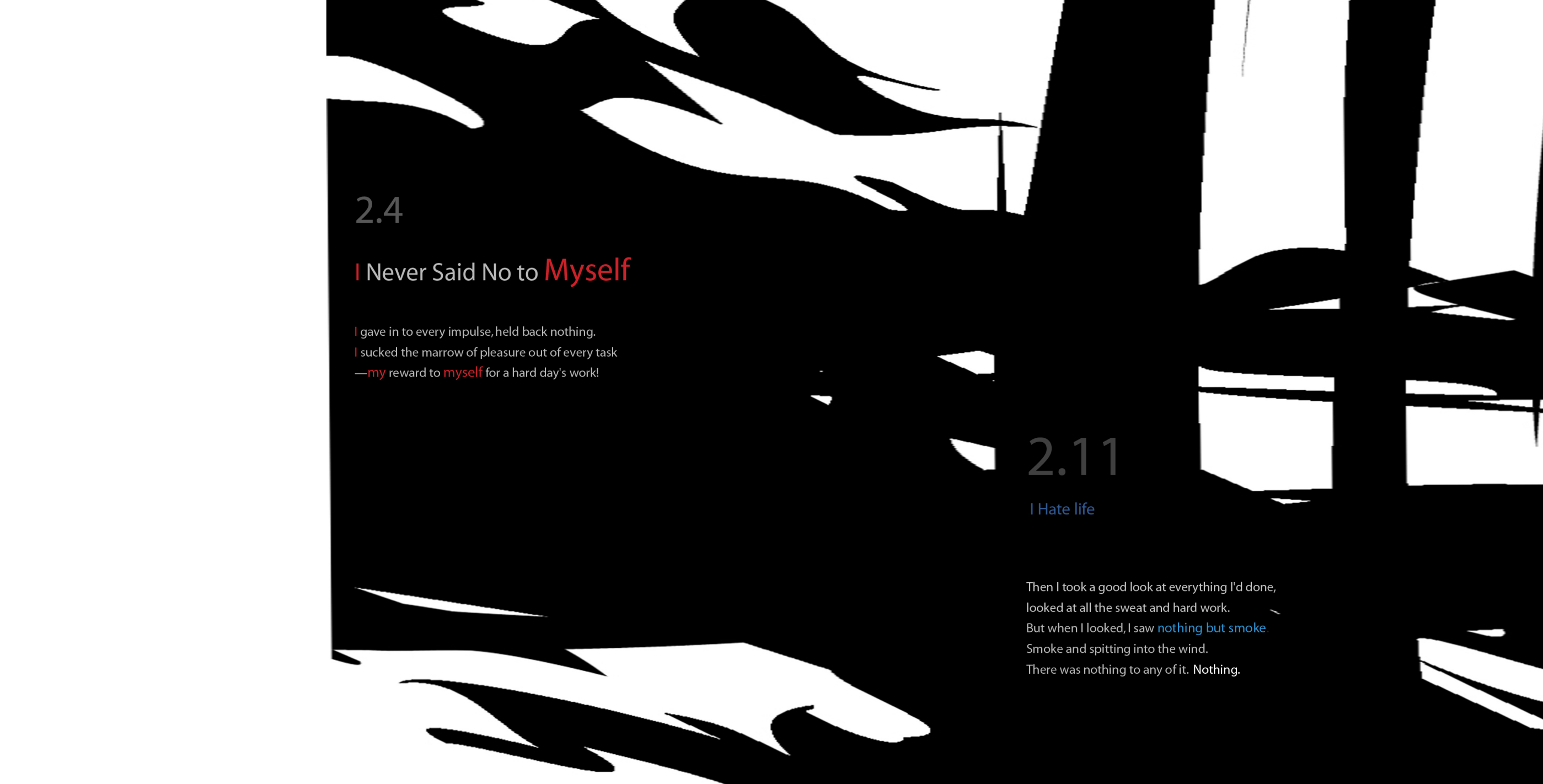
and all the wisdom I could muster,

I tried my level best

to penetrate the absurdity of life.

I wanted to get a handle on anything useful we mortals might do

during the years we spend on this earth.



2.4

I Never Said No to **Myself**

I gave in to every impulse, held back nothing.

I sucked the marrow of pleasure out of every task

—my reward to **myself** for a hard day's work!

2.11

I Hate life

Then I took a good look at everything I'd done,
looked at all the sweat and hard work.

But when I looked, I saw **nothing but smoke**

Smoke and spitting into the wind.

There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.

call it quits

2.20-23

That's when I called it quits,
gave up on anything that could be hoped for on this earth.
What's the point of working your fingers to the bone
if you hand over what you worked for to someone who
never lifted a finger for it?
Smoke, that's what it is.

A bad business from start to finish.
So what do you get from a life of hard labor?
Pain and grief from dawn to dusk.
Never a decent night's rest.
Nothing but
Smoke.

2.18-19 I hate life. As far as I can see, what happens on earth is a
bad business. It's smoke—and spitting into the wind.
And I hated everything I'd accomplished and accumulated on this earth.
I can't take it with me—no, I have to leave it to whoever comes after me.
Whether they're worthy or worthless—and who's to tell?
—they'll take over the earthly results of my intense thinking and hard work.

Smoke.

2.24-26

The best you can do with your life is have a good time
and get by the best you can. The way I see it, that's it—divine fate.
Whether we feast or fast, it's up to God.
God may give wisdom and knowledge and joy to his favorites,
but sinners are assigned a life of hard labor,
and end up turning their wages over to God's favorites.
Nothing but smoke—and spitting into the wind.

3.9-13

But in the end, does it really make a difference what anyone does? I've had a good look at what God has given us to do—
but he's left us in the dark, so we can never know what God is up to, whether he's coming or

That's it—eat, drink, and make the most of your job.

It's God's gift.

busywork, mostly. True, God made everything beautiful in itself and in its time—
going. I've decided that there's nothing better to do than go ahead and have a good time and get the most we can out of life.

3.1-8

There's a Right Time for Everything

There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth:

A right time for birth and another for death,

A right time to plant and another to reap,

A right time to kill and another to heal,

A right time to destroy and another to construct,

A right time to cry and another to laugh,

A right time to lament and another to cheer,

A right time to make love and another to abstain,

A right time to embrace and another to part,

A right time to search and another to count your losses,

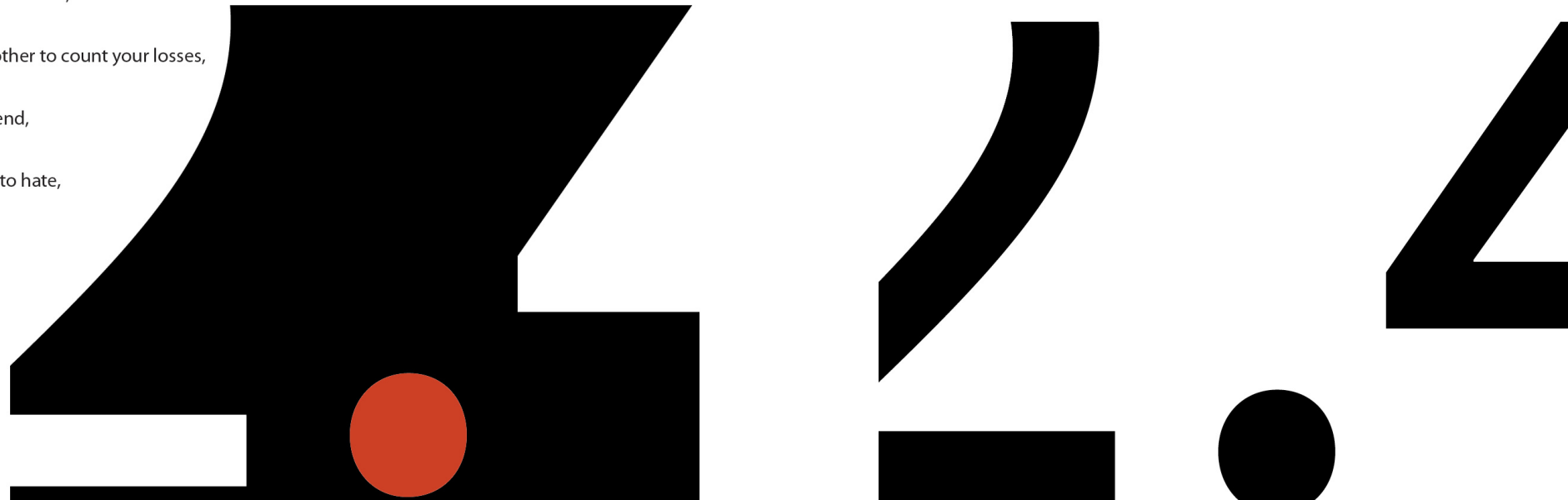
A right time to hold on and another to let go,

A right time to rip out and another to mend,

A right time to shut up and another to speak up,

A right time to love and another to hate,

A right time to wage war and another to make



Why Am I Working Like a Dog?

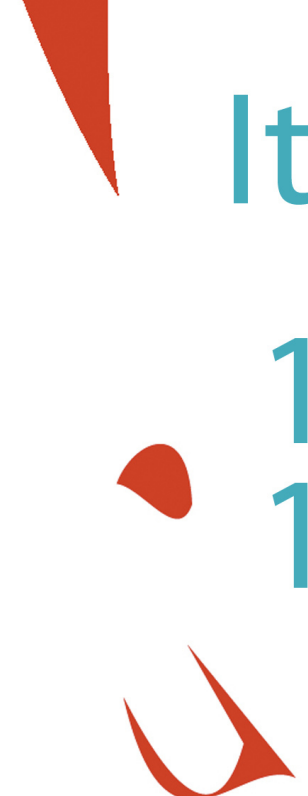
I turned my head and saw yet another wisp of smoke on its way to nothingness: a solitary person, completely alone—no children, no family, no friends—yet working obsessively late into the night, compulsively greedy for more and more, never bothering to ask, "Why am I working like a dog, never having any fun? And who cares?"
More smoke. A bad business.

Slow Suicide

Next I turned my attention to all the outrageous violence that takes place on this planet—the tears of the victims, no one to comfort them; the iron grip of oppressors, no one to rescue the victims from them. So I congratulated the dead who are already dead instead of the living who are still alive. But luckier than the dead or the living is the person who has never even been, who has never seen the bad business that takes place on this earth. Then I observed all the work and ambition motivated by envy. What a waste! Smoke. And spitting into the wind.

The fool sits back and takes it easy,
His sloth is slow suicide.

One handful of peaceful repose
Is better than two fistfuls of worried work—
More spitting into the wind.



It's better to have a partner than go it alone.
Share the work, share the wealth.
And if one falls down, the other helps,
But if there's no one to help, tough!

Two in a bed warm each other.
Alone, you shiver all night.

By yourself you're unprotected.
With a friend you can face the worst.
Can you round up a third?
A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.

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God's in Charge, Not You

Watch your step when you enter God's house.

Enter to learn. That's far better than mindlessly offering a sacrifice,

Doing more harm than good.

Don't shoot off your mouth, or speak before you think.

Don't be too quick to tell God what you think he wants to hear.

God's in charge, not you—the less you speak, the better.

Overwork makes for restless sleep.
Overtalk shows you up as a fool.
When you tell God you'll do
something, do it—now. God
takes no pleasure in foolish
gabble. Vow it, then do it.
Far better not to vow in
the first place than to
vow and not pay up.

The one who loves money is never satisfied with money,
Nor the one who loves wealth with big profits. **More smoke.**

Hard and honest work earns a good night's sleep,
Whether supper is beans or steak.
But a rich man's belly gives him insomnia.

He arrived naked from the womb of his mother;
He'll leave in the same condition—with nothing.

Yes, we should make the most of what God gives,
both the bounty and the capacity to enjoy it,
accepting what's given and delighting in the work.
It's God's gift! God deals out joy in the present, the now.
It's useless to brood over how long we might live.

But against all illusion and fantasy and empty talk
There's always this rock foundation: Fear God!

7.7

We work to feed
our appetites;
Meanwhile our souls
go hungry.

7.11-12 The more words that are spoken, the more smoke there is in the air. And who is any better off? And who knows what's

7.20 There's not one totally good person on earth, Not one who is truly pure and sinless.

How to Interpret the Meaning of Life

7.23-25 I tested everything in my search for wisdom. I set out to be wise, but it was beyond me, far beyond me, and deep—oh so deep! the meaning of life. I also wanted to identify evil and stupidity, foolishness and craziness.

8.1

Wisdom

There's nothing better than
being wise, Knowing how to
interpret the meaning of life.
puts light in the eyes,
And gives gentleness
to words and manners.

best for us as we live out our meager smoke-and-shadow lives? And who can tell any of us the next chapter of our lives?

Does anyone ever find it? I concentrated with all my might, studying and exploring and seeking wisdom—



8.12-13

Even though a person sins and gets by with it hundreds of times throughout a long life, I'm still convinced that the good life is reserved for the person who fears God, who lives reverently in his presence, and that the evil person will not experience a "good" life. No matter how many days he lives, they'll all be as flat and **colorless** as a shadow—because he doesn't fear God.


8.15-17

So, I'm all for just going ahead and having a good time—the best possible. The only earthly good men and women can look forward to is to eat and drink well and have a good time—compensation for the struggle for survival these few years God gives us on earth.

When I determined to load up on wisdom and examine everything taking place on earth, I realized that if you keep your eyes open day and night without even blinking, you'll still never figure out the meaning of what God is doing on this earth.

Search as hard as you like,
you're not going to make sense of it.

No matter how smart you are, you won't get to the bottom of it.



Seize Life!

9.7-10

Seize life!

Eat bread with gusto,

Drink awine with a robust heart.

Oh yes—God takes pleasure in your pleasure!

Dress festively every morning.

Don't skimp on colors and scarves.

Relish life with the spouse you love

Each and every day of your precarious life.

Each day is God's gift. It's all you get in exchange

For the hard work of staying alive.

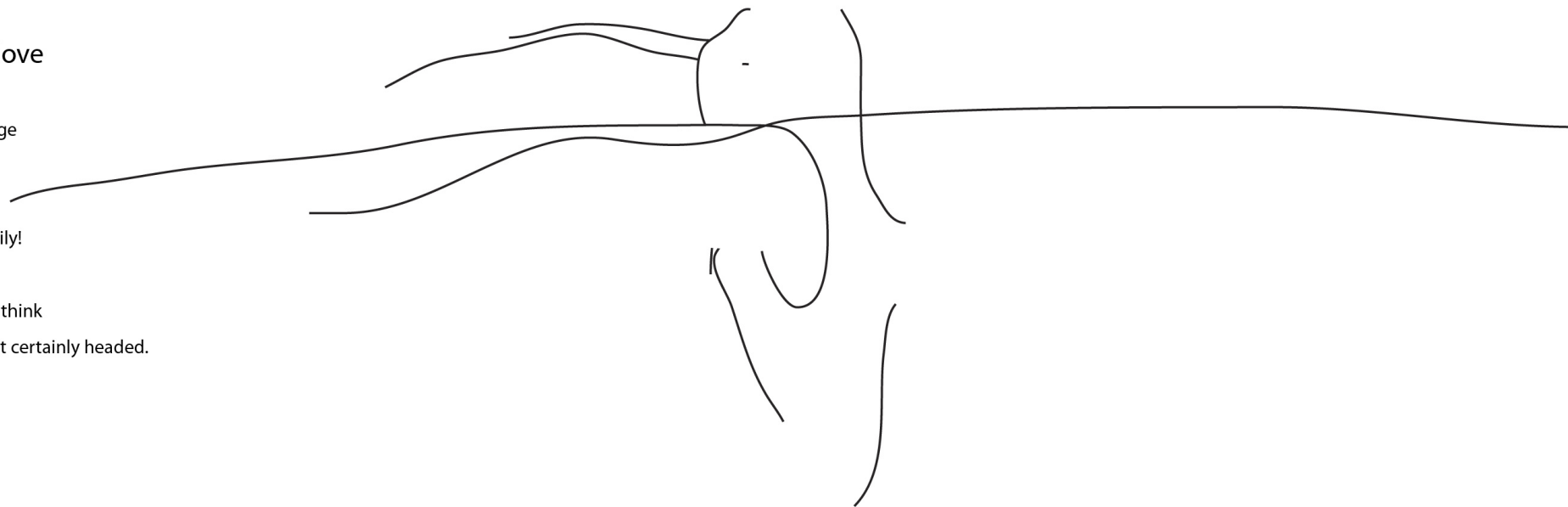
Make the most of each one!

Whatever turns up, grab it and do it. And heartily!

This is your last and only chance at it,

For there's neither work to do nor thoughts to think

In the company of the dead, where you're most certainly headed.



10.5-7

10.12-13

The words of a wise person are gracious.
The talk of a fool self-destructs—
He starts out talking nonsense
And ends up spouting insanity and evil.

10.18

A shiftless man lives in a tumbledown shack;
A lazy woman ends up with a leaky roof.

Here's a piece of bad business

I've seen on this earth, An error thatcan be blamed on

whoever is in charge: Immaturity is given a place of prominence,

While maturity is made to take..... a backseat.

I've seen unproven upstarts riding in style,

While experienced veterans are put out to pasture.



11.1-2

Be generous: Invest in acts of charity. Charity yields high returns.
Don't hoard your goods; spread them around.
Be a blessing to others. This could be your last night.

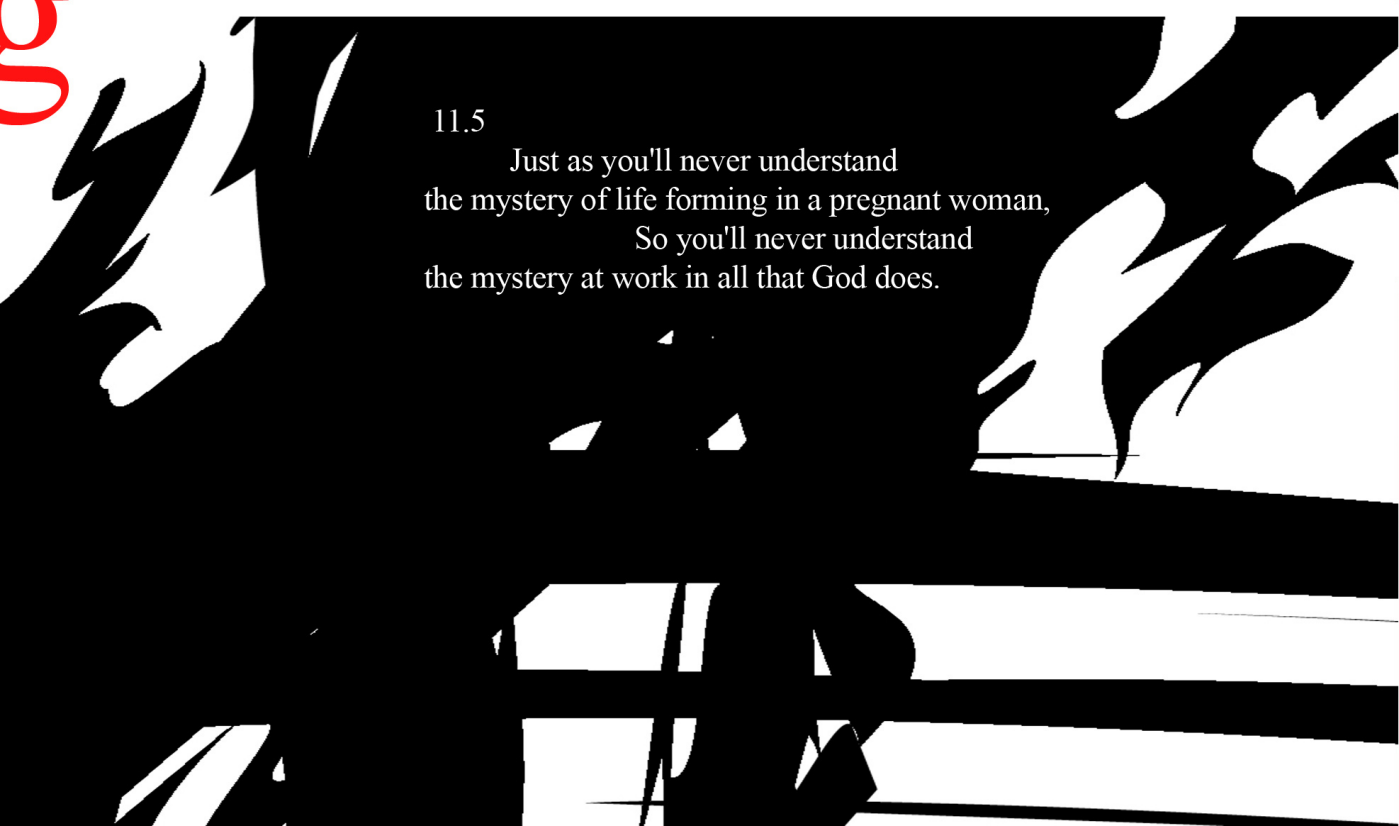
11.7-10

Before the Years Take Their Toll

11.5

Just as you'll never understand
the mystery of life forming in a pregnant woman,
So you'll never understand
the mystery at work in all that God does.

g



honor + enjoy your Creator while you're still young

Before the years take their toll and your vigor wanes,

Before your vision dims and the world blurs

And the winter years keep you close to the fire.

12.1-8

In old age, your body no longer serves you so well.

Muscles slacken, grip weakens, joints stiffen.

The shades are pulled down on the world.

You can't come and go at will. Things grind to a halt.

The hum of the household fades away.

You are wakened now by bird-song.

Hikes to the mountains are a thing of the past.

Even a stroll down the road has its terrors.

Your hair turns apple-blossom white,

Adorning a fragile and impotent matchstick body.

Yes, you're well on your way to eternal rest,

While your friends make plans for your funeral.

Life, lovely while it lasts, is soon over.

Life as we know it, precious and beautiful, ends.

The body is put back in the same ground it came from.

The spirit returns to God, who first breathed it.

It's all smoke, nothing but smoke.

The Quester says that everything's smoke.

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