My shrink advised I get a dog. An Emotional Support Dog. He went so far as to write me an official letter granting me permission to bring this ESD with me on planes and trains and buses. I haven't gotten the dog yet. But just having a letter from my doctor folded in my wallet puts me at ease. When I do get the dog, I know what I'll name it: Placebo.

Thank God. Emotional support is on the way. Is this anything like a “supporter,” also known as a jockstrap? Maybe I wouldn't need so much support if I were to let my life just hang.

Or drop. Like when a big walnut drops off a branch and lands with a thud in a shady patch of grass near the sandbox. What if I drop out? I could get one of those campers, the kind that configures to the bed of a pickup. Like the one that family lives in during their month on Montague Street every year. When they come to sell trees the day after Thanksgiving.

Or I could get a big industrial crane to lift my mom's old Volkswagen camper up above the gingko trees and set it down softly on the roof of my brownstone. And that's where I'll live. In the Vanagon. A city poet. With a kind of modest homebase.

I'll be like the poet illustrated in the Carl Spitzweg painting from 1839. He sits in bed under a blanket with his knees up. Deep in his writing. And he keeps an open umbrella in bed with him. Presumably this was his solution for the leaky ceiling directly over his bed. He heats the room by burning his early drafts.
The brain

of a wrinkled poet was finally mine. The brain had once sat in
a skull in a head on the same park bench every day. For forty
years. Now, finally, this brain was mine.

It was like a black glove with mini-marbles in the knuckles
and fingers. I tried to pin down its octopussial tentacles and
rub the hard little satin-covered nodules. (These are the calci-
fied ideas. Original ideas. Content.)

The poet had published three collections and had managed
to have them all graduate from print into oblivion. Impressive.

When he wasn’t on his bench in the park, he was in a bare
studio apartment, furnished with just a window. The fresh
light was baked daily. And a royal blue sleeping bag occupied
the floor like man’s best friend.

And there was one other odd accessory: a huge iron crow- 
bar, that sat on the floor next to the bed. It was there in the
event of a cave-in.

I probed further, using my micro-scalpel and digital
arthroscope to make an incision, and remove one of the

ideas, which I was then able to examine more closely under a
high-powered lens. It looked like a pink peppercorn. I tapped
it lightly with my mallet. It didn’t crumble. When I pinched it
with my forceps, I found it far less brittle than I had antici-
pated. It was more like an egg of caviar in layered, compressed
plates of zinc armor. It was a complex BB with callouses. A
caper of flesh. I took it and peeled it like a microscopic cab-
bage—removing one layer after the next.

Each leaf had a rather pronounced network of vessels
branching across its moth-like surface. The vessels were
bulging like the veins on the back of my hand.
I ordered

a four-thousand dollar Gibson arch-top hollow-body on line. And it came today in a cardboard box. And the UPS woman handed me her digital pad and I signed, and after she pulled off in her truck, I stood for a second with my box at my front door. Rather than rushing upstairs, ripping it open, and plugging it into my amp, I decided to carry the box two blocks around the corner to the UPS store, where I filled out a shipping invoice, and left it to be sent back to the factory. Round trip.

Why? Why did I balk? The guitar, I realized, did not fit my disposition. It was new. And I was old. It was perfect and I was imperfect. It was expensive and I was cheap. I imagined myself holding it balanced on my knee. I imagined seeing myself reflected in the dark stain of its shellacked body and pristine ebony pick-guards.

Then all I could think was how many hollow-bodies and semi-hollow bodies get manufactured and shipped out every day to middle-aged men just like me who can't play like Joe Pass and never will.
Into the fog. Away from earlier. It was Thanksgiving. The city was so empty. Trains were rolling out in all directions. Like leather belts. Airplanes were packed in a convoy. Along the single lane of sky. Nose to tail. Nose to tail.

The bartender kept topping me off. I asked Brooke if any Greek philosopher had ever spoken about planting seeds in the minds of married women. I insisted to Brooke that she let me pay the bill and that she wait for me out front. I was tired of the rushing street corner. The goodbye. The scene where we embrace. And I feel her hand gently pat my back. Goodnight. As if to say: little boy.
When I was playing football in maybe sixth grade, I slipped through a narrow gap between the tackle and guard and found myself with some running room. I was on my way, when my knees were swept out from under me. The whistle blew and the ball was dead at the one yard line.


But why? With or without an injury, why hadn't some force, some momentum—some fight—carried me one more yard? Had some part of my drive been drained out? Extruded?

Even had I been decapitated by my chin strap when the freckled tackle Alfie Weedman took me down, wouldn't my zombie arm have reached out and out...and wouldn't I have been rescued by...by Conquest?

You'd think. Right? But I now see that my monstrous unreliable ligament had a mind of its own that day. My leg had a subversive agenda. It was a symptom of my repressed desire, my stubborn desire, to continue to live in a malleable fantasy.

My knee simply would not carry me over that hurdle. My body would not propel me beyond that significant comfort into the terminal “zone of end.” The End Zone!

And to this day, I remain touchdown-less. I remain something of a dreamer, looking back to that fated day. It is my conviction that I experienced a kind of ecstatic shut down. An ACL orgasm. An involuntary ejaculation of my ligament into the fleshy socket of my knee. Alfie had not tackled me so much as embraced my collapse, padded my fall. Padded me! From overwhelming expectations.

I was chased across the parking lot by the entire staff of waiters and bartenders in their forest green aprons and crimson polo shirts.

The cops eventually came. A lawyer was hired. A deal was struck. I got off working three long nights as their cheerful dishwasher.

They were overly-forgiving. By the end of my time, they had somewhat sided with the criminal. It was with distinct pleasure that they led me out to the walk-in refrigerator and pointed to the brand new security camera that had just been installed.
At

Yale, they shop for poetry classes. This is in the first few weeks of the semester. They try out teachers. They conduct auditions.

They show up and sit there. With no real curiosity other than to see if you will be funny. If you will make them laugh out loud. So you’re like expected to pull one out of your hat. And if you don’t, they just walk right out.

A few years ago, I was hired for a semester at Yale. And there was some mix up with the scheduling of my class. And a few days before the start of the semester they had presumably changed the time of my class without informing me.

My morning had started off great. I was right on time. But when I came into the building, Reed shot out of his office and greeted me at the front door with hostility. He asked me where I had been, in a very accusatory tone.

I rummaged through my book bag and found the wrinkled paperwork they had sent me only a few weeks prior. I held my fist full of papers in the air.

As the papers clearly showed, I wasn’t late. On the contrary. I was an hour early! Motherfuckers!

But what was I going to do? “Close to forty students were packed in the classroom,” said my TA, Alexa, who was practically in tears. “I did everything in my power to keep them. For the first fifteen minutes, I pretended that you were about to make a grand entrance. Anything to keep them from ditching. But, one by one, they got up and left the room.”
I was walking

Ponyo, when I came upon a sparkling new Lexus parked out in front of my brownstone. It was idling. But with no driver in sight. I stood there for a few minutes listening to its monotonal groove, expecting the car's driver to dash out of one of the nearby buildings, hop in the car, and drive away. Who leaves their unmanned car running for that long? A few more minutes and still no driver. Ponyo, beside me, alert, patient on her leash.

I crept up to the tinted window and peeked in. I reached out and grabbed the door handle. It opened. I quickly shut it.

I looked around. Thoughts were racing through my head. I could steal this car. I could drive it to Pt. Pleasant Beach. And hawk it for a jet ski or something. Or a dozen raw clams on the half shell.

The next morning, when I swung open my front door, there it was. The Lexus! It was still idling in park. All night on one tank of gas.