

## Notes from A Man Without A Country

Kurt Vonnegut

Vonnegut, Kurt. *A Man Without A Country*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005.

“...laughter...God knows, that’s the soul seeking some relief.”<sup>1</sup>

“Humor is an almost physiological response to fear.”<sup>2</sup>

“There are real life situations so hopeless. That no relief is imaginable.”<sup>3</sup>

“Evolution can go to hell as far as I am concerned. What a mistake we are. We have mortally wounded this sweet life-supporting planet – the only one in the whole Milky Way – with a century of transportation whoopee.”<sup>4</sup>

“Anyone got an atomic bomb? Who doesn’t have an atomic bomb nowadays?”<sup>5</sup>

“Stalin was happy to take Marx’s truism as a decree, and Chinese tyrants as well, since it seemingly empowered them to put preachers out of business who might speak ill of them or their goals.”<sup>6</sup>

“You know, the truth can be really powerful stuff.”<sup>7</sup>

“If you want to really hurt your parents, and you don’t have the nerve to be gay, the least you can do is go into the arts.”<sup>8</sup>

“If you have messed around with Ouija boards, you know there are malicious spirits floating around, liable to tell you anything, and you shouldn’t believe them.”<sup>9</sup>

“And if I die – God forbid – I would like to go to heaven to ask somebody in charge up there, “Hey, what was the good news and what was the bad news?”<sup>10</sup>

“The last thing that I ever wanted was to be alive when the three most powerful people on the whole planet would be named Bush, Dick and Colon.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 34.

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 40.

“And by the grace of God, or whatever, I am not an alcoholic, largely a matter of genes.”<sup>12</sup>

“Our close cousins the gorillas and oranges and chimps and gibbon apes have gotten along just fine all this time while eating raw vegetable matter, whereas we not only prepare hot meals but have now all but destroyed this once salubrious planet as a life-support system in fewer than two hundred years, mainly by making thermodynamic whoopee with fossil fuels.”<sup>13</sup>

“Let’s talk about women. Freud said he didn’t know what women wanted. I know what women want: a whole lot of people to talk to. What do they want to talk about? They want to talk about everything. What do men want? They want a lot of pals, and they wish people wouldn’t get so mad at them. Why are so many people getting divorced today? It is because most of us do not have extended families anymore. It used to be that when a man and a woman got married, the bride got a lot more people to talk to about everything. The groom got a lot more pals to tell dumb jokes to.”<sup>14</sup>

“When a couple has an argument nowadays, they may think it’s about money or power or sex or how to raise the kids or whatever. What they’re really saying to each other, though without realizing it, is this: “You are not enough people!””<sup>15</sup>

“Today we have contraptions like nuclear submarines armed with Poseidon mussels that have H-bombs in their warheads. And we have contraptions like computers that cheat you out of becoming. Bill Gates says, “Wait till you can see what your computer can become.” But it’s you who should be doing the becoming, not the damn fool computer. What you can become is the miracle you were born to be through the work that you do.”<sup>16</sup>

“Progress has beat the heck out of me.”<sup>17</sup>

“Electronic communities build nothing. You wind up nothing.”<sup>18</sup>

“We are dancing animals.”<sup>19</sup>

“How beautiful it is to get up and go out and do something. We are here on Earth to fart around. Don’t let anybody tell you any different.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 43.

<sup>14</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 48.

<sup>16</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 56.

<sup>17</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 56.

<sup>18</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 61.

<sup>19</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 61.

<sup>20</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 62.

“I put my big questions about life to my son the pediatrician. Dr. Vonnegut said this to his doddering old dad: “Father, we are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is.”<sup>21</sup>

“No matter how corrupt, greedy, and heartless our government, our corporations, our media, and our religious and charitable institutions may become, the music will still be wonderful. If I should ever die, God forbid, let this be my epitaph: The only proof he needed for the existence of God was music.”<sup>22</sup>

“Now, during our catastrophically idiotic war in Vietnam, the music kept getting better and better and better. We lost that war, by the way. Order couldn’t be restored in Indochina until the people kicked us out. That war only made billionaires out of millionaires. Today’s war is making trillionaires out of billionaires. Now I call that progress.”<sup>23</sup>

“Foreigners love us for our jazz. And they don’t hate us for our purported liberty and justice for all. They hate us now for our arrogance.”<sup>24</sup>

“...your children...and on and on...heir to a shockingly recent history of human slavery, to an AIDS epidemic, and to nuclear submarines slumbering on the floors of fjords in Iceland and elsewhere, crews prepared at a moment’s notice to turn industrial quantities of men, women, and children into radioactive soot and bone meal by means of rocks and H-bomb warheads.”<sup>25</sup>

“Our children have inherited technologies whose byproducts, whether in war or peace, are rapidly destroying the whole planet as a breathable, drinkable system for supporting life of any kind.”<sup>26</sup>

“Human beings, past and present, have trashed the joint.”<sup>27</sup>

“I don’t think people give a damn whether the planet goes on or not. It seems to me as if everyone is living as members of Alcoholics Anonymous do, day by day. And a few more days will be enough. I know of very few people who are dreaming of a world for their grandchildren.”<sup>28</sup>

“...I know now that there is not a chance in hell of America becoming humane and reasonable. Because power corrupts us, and absolute power corrupts us absolutely.”<sup>29</sup>

“Human beings are chimpanzees who get crazy drunk on power.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 66.

<sup>22</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 66.

<sup>23</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 67.

<sup>24</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 69.

<sup>25</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 70.

<sup>26</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 70.

<sup>27</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 70.

<sup>28</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 70-71.

<sup>29</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 71.

<sup>30</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 71.

“How do humanists feel about Jesus? I say of Jesus, as all humanists do, “If what he said is good, and so much of it is absolutely beautiful, what does it matter if he was God or not?” But if Christ hadn’t delivered the Sermon on the Mount, with its message of mercy and pity, I wouldn’t want to be a human being. I’d just as soon be a rattlesnake.”<sup>31</sup>

“And if you actually are an education, thinking person, you will not be welcome in Washington, D.C.”<sup>32</sup>

“So I am a man without a country, except for the librarians and a Chicago paper called *In These Times*.”<sup>33</sup>

“I hate H-bombs and the Jerry Springer Show.”<sup>34</sup>

“For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes. But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course that’s Moses, not Jesus. I haven’t heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere. “Blessed are the merciful” in a courtroom? “Blessed are the peacemakers” in the Pentagon? Give me a break!”<sup>35</sup>

“But I myself feel that our country, for whose Constitution I found in a just war, might as well have been invaded by Martians and body snatchers. Sometimes I wish it had been. What has happened instead is that it was taken over by means of the sleaziest, low-comedy, Keystone Cops-style coup d’etat imaginable.”<sup>36</sup>

“There is a tragic flaw in our precious Constitution, and I don’t know what can be done to fix it. This is it: Only nut cases want to be president. This was true even in high school. Only clearly disturbed people ran for class president.”<sup>37</sup>

“There’s only one rule that I know of: Goddamn it, Joe, you’ve got to be kind!”<sup>38</sup>

“The good Earth – we could have saved it, but we were too damn cheap and lazy.”<sup>39</sup>

“Humor is a way of holding off how awful life can be, to protect yourself. Finally, you get just too tired, and the news is too awful, and humor doesn’t work anymore.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 80-81.

<sup>32</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 85.

<sup>33</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 87.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 96.

<sup>35</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 98.

<sup>36</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 98-99.

<sup>37</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 102.

<sup>38</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 107.

<sup>39</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 122.

<sup>40</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *A Man Without A Country* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 129.