

CHAPTER 1: BLOGS

Rap Genius was born from a blogosphere¹ - its midwife was the Blogger platform which, you can choose to believe me or not, we were using even BEFORE Google acquired it. My friend Dan was on the Yale rugby team - we called him "Rugby Dan" - and he was really excited one day to show all of us his new "blog" ("what's that?")² which was called "Finnegan's Wake".

In spite of the literary appellation - and Rugby Dan is a literary artist and thinker, to be sure - Finn's Wake was a policy wonk blog, with electoral college predictions state-by-state and things like that. This was in 2005. For some reason, when blogs were born, like, 90% of blogs were about politics. It was only later, as the rest of us bloggers began to get involved, that blogs began to encompass sex, family issues, weed - basically everything cool came later, the original blogs were all either about politics, gardening or cooking.

Rugby Dan was 2 years younger than I was, but I've always had a lust for youthful vigor. I love kickin it with tha youngstas. In fact, almost ALL of my friends from college were younger than me because I was a trouble maker: my first year of college, I was featured in the school newspaper for committing a crime³, so none of my classmates who were my age wanted to hang out with me.

Probably my favorite youth was Ilan - maybe this name sounds familiar to you... (think "Ilan Ramon" the first Israeli astronaut (RIP)):



"Please join me in singing the Hatikvah..."

¹ That is what we called our gang - "The Blogosphere".

² It is short for "weblog" (web-log - not "we blog" - although maybe it is both...)

³ What was the crime?

MY Ilan was EVEN PRETTIER than the famous space Ilan - his face reminded me of this super-cute Israeli girl I had a crush on in high school. Of course, as you might expect, Ilan was lithe, dainty and capricious and this would get tiresome sometimes, but he was so FUNNY that I still loved chilling with him in spite (or perhaps because of) his feminine attributes.

Ilan was the first person to make an ACTUAL blog, inspired by Rugby Dan but also intended to poke fun at him in a mirthful, wholesome way. Ilan's blog was called "Divine Revelations of the ACTUAL God" named after a book by this weirdo homeless guy in the Midwest who invented his own religion in the 60s - this would later become the subject of Ilan's senior thesis (he majored in Religious Studies!⁴) There were a set of "blog groupies" who referred to Ilan as "Actual God" or sometimes "AG" - and I still call him that sometimes, too.

Ilan's blog was about sex, troubled family relationships, travel... he was totally mortified when his mom discovered it via Google search because of posts like this:

Ring, ring, ring...

Actual God: Hello

Mom: Hi.

Actual God: Hi.

Mom: How bout those tigers?⁵

Actual God: Yeah. Pretty cool.

Mom: Veerrry cool.

Actual God: Yeah. Haha.

Mom: What's so funny?

Actual God: Nothing.

(silence)

Mom: What are you doing now?

Actual God: I'm about to jump in the shower. I need to wake up.

⁴ Ilan's parents are attorneys - but he SEEMS like he is the Rabbi's Son.

⁵ Ilan is from Detroit. Well...actually he's from Beverly Hills Michigan (LOL).

I had just taken a shower, and was naked.⁶

Mom: Well we can't wait to visit you. Did I tell you what Maya said?

Actual God: I don't know.

Mom: Totally out of the blue yesterday, she said "I love when Actual God burps my name."

Actual God: Oh, that is cute.

Mom: So cute. She can't wait to see you.

Actual God: Can't wait to see her.

Mom: She asked me when we were gonna visit you and I told her right after Halloween, and she gave me the biggest, heartiest hug.

Actual God: Aww.

Mom: Awwwwwww.

Actual God: Yeah.

Mom: So. How's your screenplay coming?

Actual God: Good.

Mom: That's great. Eh - hmm...you know if it ever gets produced, I'm gonna see it, even if you don't want to show me.

Actual God: (groaning sounds)

Mom: What? Am I too weird?

Actual God: (groaning sounds and mumble something about being predictable)

Mom: I think I'd rather be too weird than too predictable.

Actual God: Uh -

Mom: I guess I'm a little of both.

Actual God: Okay mom.

Mom: (very self-conscious sounding) Okay.

Actual God: (patronizing) I love you.

Mom: Love you too sweetie.

Honestly go fuck yourself.

Ilán's mom is a total MILF and a caring, super-smart lady - I love her. Imagine how conflicted she must have felt when she first read this post!!

⁶ Ilán has a beautiful body.

I already had a man-crush on Ian before he ever even started blogging. But Actual God cemented my love hardcore. By the time his blog began receiving critical praise and groupie fanfare, I had started law school at Stanford and we were 3 thousand miles away.⁷

Law school was super alienating and lonely for me, especially since it was set in such a beautiful place. I don't know if you've ever seen Stanford, but it is basically a manly version of the Garden of Eden; being there with no friends filled me to the brim with Sadderall. I really liked some of my professors tho.

There was *one* professor in my first year of law school who had a hardcore impact on my life. This was none other than the famed Larry Lessig⁸, who is my hero, and the man who made me fall in love with the Internet.⁹



You know why the head is so big? bc it is FILLED WITH BRAINS!!

It was a perfect storm: Lessig, blogs, and of course I joined Facebook my first year of law school too. At that point, Facebook didn't even have photos and was purely dedicated to art. Sex had not yet become ingrained in the apparatus. Early Facebook was like the birth of cinema; only smart people were allowed on Facebook back then¹⁰, and the poetics of conversation on this revolutionary medium was at an all-time high.

⁷ I missed him!

⁸ He was a character on The West Wing!

⁹ Lessig is the *inventor* of "Internet Law" - he was the first person ever to think about the internet from a legal approach.

¹⁰ You could only join if you went to an ivy league school or Stanford.

Facebook. Lessig. Blogs.

I felt kinda dirty riding Ilan's coattails, but I needed a blog too! I decided to structure mine as an homage to the Actual God - I copied his fonts and color scheme, and I christened the blog "Wit and Wisdom of the BENEFICENT Allah" in order to give the ACTUAL God an Islamic twist. Although I am Jewish, I have always had a deep reverence for Islam (I studied Arabic throughout college) and I consider myself an "Islam-Jew". I took the name from Qu'ran quotes I'd sometimes run across, like this:

"Your Allah is one, there is none who has the right to be worshiped but He, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful" (2:163)

Of course, the problem with "Beneficent Allah" was that nobody knows how to spell "Beneficent".¹¹ Fans would often refer to the blog as "The Beneficial Allah" - which I totally didn't mind because I certainly intended for the reader to benefit from my musings.

SOMEday, my blog would get me into loads of trouble and spawn the Rap Exegesis which is the very subject of this book! But lets not move *too* fast...¹²

My early posts were filled to the brim with nostalgia as I sat in the law library and reminisced on the bygone days of my youth. I would write about my friends from high school and attempt to revert into a childhood cocoon¹³; here is an example of an early canonical post, entitled "Avi <3 Avi":

Avi♥Avi

The Law Cafe stopped taking IOU's today, but they told me that I am the *only* student still allowed to get them, because I always pay in the afternoon, and I am "muy guapo"¹⁴...

¹¹ We would run into a similar problem with the word "Exegesis" - which is the only word that TRULY describes the function Rap Genius performs. We currently use the word "annotate" which is a compromise.

The sad thing is that all the *really* really good words out there, nobody knows how to spell them! This is the Central Conundrum of Marketing (CCM).

¹² This happens in **Chapter 3** if you wanna skip ahead... (am I boring you?)

¹³ It was a Freudian Blog...

¹⁴ The law cafe was run by spirited, dope-ass Mexicans who lived in East Palo Alto aka "the barrio"; I would always converse in broken Spanish with them. (Here, they are making a *chiste* most likely...)

Today, I wanted to tell y'all a little story about a man who I hardly know...I don't know if you've noticed, but - even though I am not a homosexual - a *lot* of my blog is devoted to men who I admire, and who I try to model myself after. Let's call this genre of posts - for lack of a better term - the "male models"

On swim team, in high school, I had a homegirl named Morin. She's Israeli, and I always kind of wanted to hit that.¹⁵ Anyways, Morin's dad would always come to swim meets. He was a Moroccan Israeli, and a baller through and through. He had this long ponytail and a porno star moustache...the first time I saw him, I was afraid he was there to plant a bomb! I only found out later that he's on *our* side.¹⁶

Anyways, Morin's dad - Avi - was a mega-baller. Still is...he does real estate development, and owns Sassi restaurant in Encino¹⁷, which is one of my family's favorites. (When you walk in, there's a big picture of Avi posing with Joe Lieberman...so Avi!)

On Thursday nights, you can find Avi at Tempo¹⁸ - Encino's Israeli hotspot - making it rain¹⁹ on stage, with the live Israeli music, with crisp dollar bills that he got at Bank of America in the morning, expressly for that purpose. He's been doing this for years...so as far as I can tell Lil' Wayne ripped him off. How baller?!

If you haven't figured it out yet, Avi drives an SL600²⁰. Black - bien sur mungs - and rollin on twinkies²¹. The license plate? Avi♥Avi.

Avi's wife (obviously smokin hot) is named Eti; also three letters. Avi could have been a nice guy and gotten it Avi♥Eti. He could have even been an asshole, and gotten Eti♥Avi. But noooo! He cut Eti out of the picture altogether.

¹⁵ Morin has a BABY now! Baby Noa (her dad is a curly haired Moroccan pimp) - she is very cute with her curly hair.

¹⁶ Israelis and Palestinians are cousins, after all...

¹⁷ Quite a classy restaurant - has a French air! (Encino is where I grew up - nicest part of The Valley except for maayyyyyybe Studio City).

¹⁸ UPDATE: Tempo got shut down (it is now a tapas place called "Boca") =(

¹⁹ This was Lil Wayne's term for when you throw money at the strippers.

²⁰ This car is like 12 racks (\$120K)...

²¹ (20-inch rims)

Avi's like heaven, everybody tryin to get to him. My Persian friends and I aspire to be so baller...but I wouldn't hold your breath. Well, at least we can copy his license plate idea. Ben Nabati is committed to getting Ben♥Ben as soon as he gets married. Me? Best I can do is Mah♥bod.

The blog became more and more crucial as I grew estranged from law school. I dated my first girlfriend from age 17 to 24 - she was the only girlfriend I ever had - and we broke up in law school; when that happened, my blog became my only solace. She had gone to Brooklyn Law School²² (aka the "BK Broiler"²³) and she was similarly estranged from the law.

When we broke up she, too, started a blog called "My Next Ex Boyfriend", which I always thought was a tremendously catchy title. We became embroiled in a post-relationship blogging art competition.²⁴

The summer after my second year of law school, I interned for the law firm Skadden Arps in NYC²⁵. This was basically as meme of a job as you could get in the pre-recession Era of Decadence. I didn't do any work at Skadden - I was probably the worst intern they ever had, even worse than the one who got written up in the New Yorker!²⁶ - but I *did* blog fecundly. Also, the firm took me to a lot of expensive dinners, which helped my creative juices flow.

FOR ME, this post-relationship era was the height of blogs. I was writing in this sniveling, bitchy voice akin to Brett Easton Ellis, who is my favorite living author.²⁷ I was a better writer then than I am now, no diggity - after all, I was younger, and the Wisdom of Age will never truly come to replace the vigorous Genius of Youth.

²² TO THIS DAY, I refuse to set foot in the non-Williamsburg part of Brooklyn because it reminds me of her (too painful!)

²³ Homage to Burger King's attempt at a "healthy" sandwich (remember?)

²⁴ The funny thing is that my O.G. ex-girlfriend would eventually go down as an important historical figure in the history of Rap Genius; she was the first user, to my knowledge, to annotate Shakira on the site and even started a facebook page called "Rap Exegette" ("if Rap Genius is Jay Z - Rap Exegette is Beyonce" was the philosophy of this movement). I suppose you could say she was the mother of "Pop Genius".....

²⁵ If they were going to make a movie about a scary corporate law firm - THIS WOULD BE THE FIRM.

²⁶ Everyone was talking about this story!

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/06/30/030630ta_talk_mcgrath

²⁷ *American Psycho* is basically my Torah.

Ilan had moved on from blogs at this point. He moved to LA after graduating and was writing for the TV show “Deadwood”²⁸ under the guidance of David Milch.²⁹ He had become “too good for blogs”, and was attempting to get his groupie love the old-fashioned way: from Showtime.

Luckily, I was not the ACTUAL God’s only acolyte - by now, his work had spawned an entire blog community!³⁰ It consisted of about a dozen bloggers, many of whom would go on to play a critical role in the foundation of Rap Genius.

Our friend Dan Berger - who would eventually become Rap Genius’ FIRST employee - was the first to follow in ACTUAL God’s footsteps and establish himself as a humorous blogger. His blog was the sort of blog you would show an employer if you were applying for a writing job, it was television-style humor. He would make really cool videos, whereas Ilan and I shunned multimedia in favor of the traditional pencil-and-paper approach to humor/expression.

From the perspective a T.R.U. intellectual, our friend Liam was of course the best blogger of all. The same way that I had a man-crush on Ilan, Ilan had a man-crush on Liam. That was the food chain.

Below is Liam’s seminal blog post entitled “Pressing Question of My Current Insomnia: A Five Paragraph Essay”

How many cigarettes do I have to smoke before the nagging half-thought I’m sure is important and True becomes an important and True thought? (It took five cigarettes to articulate this question. “It is mostly a question of articulation” was a bonus that unbiddened because sometimes you can rearrange words you just used and voila! I’m pretty sure this effect constitutes the entirety of my internal life. And I’m okay with that, kinda.) Has anyone smart and famous (for being smart, ideally) written about the relationship between language and ideas? Because someone should really look into this if they have the time

²⁸ This is Ben Horowitz’ favorite TV show, he even owns a vineyard in Napa called “Deadwood vineyards” which produces a subtle, crisp “Deadwood Merlot” - a portent of the Rap Genius future!

²⁹ We are homies with his daughters - one of them is now running “Poetry Genius” - cool right? Where is “Film Genius” tho? That’s what I wanna know...

³⁰ We playfully referred to the community as the “Blogosphere”; we would throw “Blogosphere parties”, it was great...

And what's with the special inspiration feelings that "gifted" people take particularly seriously—do less gifted people get them too? And if so, how do they relieve themselves? There was this retarded kid in my middle school who ate his hands and what was left of his fingers unless they were sheathed in a pair of chunky gloves that were deeply offensive to my young but already ossifying aesthetic sensibilities. They should have been mittens, not institutional grade hockey gloves in off-beige. They should have not fallen off all the time. And they should not have left him with wet red rashes on both wrists. I never thought through a better design. But I have ideas, so if you know how to make things we should email. It seems fair to say that it wasn't the form and function of the gloves that bothered me because braces are an ugly medieval technology and I yearned for braces even though my teeth were straight. It seems fair to say that the hand-eater was just really conspicuous evidence that the world is cruel and our efforts to mitigate cruelty are usually token, often vain, and never sufficient. I laughed at the hand-eater more than once. Way more than once. Which...He wasn't trying to eat his hands. I mean, who knows. But lots of people bite their fingernails and I'm always finding your chewed-on pencils when I need a pen. I didn't laugh to fit in. I mean, I laughed to fit in. But also because I couldn't help it. I laughed because he made funny noises, had awful motor skills, and ate his hands. Like all he wanted to do ever in life was eat his hands. His face was also pretty funny looking, which didn't help, or did. But it wasn't funny looking in the popular retard styles: he had a regular person's funny face and just happened to be retarded. I guess it's true what they say, "you can't judge a book by it's cover." I actually knew that expression then and understood its truth. Plus other expressions like that one that were also true unless you were a dick about it. I was often a dick about it

I digress

I laughed at the retarded own-hand-cannibal and I felt bad. But that was a pretty small guilt. The big guilt, remember, is that we are all complicit. I was basically a happy kid. Until my mother killed herself

She didn't. But other things have happened. There is a lot going on in my life and in other peoples' lives and in the lives of things that aren't even alive (like a rock, for example, or a pebble, for another example). I have a really good sense of this, which is to say that I'm

very aware that a lot is going on. Moreover, I'm pretty sure that I am aware of the going on and goings on in a special and important way. It's a heavy thing, but it makes me feel light. And for this reason, and the above stated points. In conclusion, I urge you to accept [my thesis](#)³¹

Liam and I would rap together in college³², he was such a good rapper that I nicknamed him "Liam's Rhymes" after the country singer LeAnn Rimes³³ - and also because his rhymes were so good!



Mic check one two....

³¹ Eventually Liam annotated this post on Poetry Genius - his only annotation was a picture of a urinal at the very end - *so Liam!*

³² Ilan would always *promise* that he was going to rap and then he would break the promise - I've never heard him spit a single bar...

³³ He looks like her, too...

Liam is very handsome and just all-around adorable, he is impossible not to love. Some of the best annotations in the History of Rap Genius are his work.³⁴ He drinks like a lush, but it only makes me love him more. One of my most seminal blog posts was about my feelings for him, it is printed just below, it is entitled "Liam's Rhymes":

"Actually do you have a *smoking* room available?"

Thugthugthuuug! I made the non-Jewishest hotel request of my life in ny on Friday in anticipation of Mr. Wrongway³⁵, who was taking the train from New Haven to stay with me³⁶. Liams is d-d-dirty dirty, and they charge a \$300 "smoking fee" in the non-smoking rooms so I didn't want to get burned. Also, I was trying to get into a "thug mentality"³⁷ since Liams is Irish; I had purposely left my Patinol³⁸ and my oiled leather sponge³⁹ at home for the same reason. A *man* doesn't need these things...

There was only one smoking floor in the entire hotel so it was pretty cloudy. One time, I waited for the elevator with two Arabs who looked like they were heading out to the club; the thicker one had his *chemise*⁴⁰ unbuttoned all the way, but tucked in to form a hair-V of extraordinary sexuality. The Australian family next door to me was conducting a Pall Mall hotbox⁴¹; through the walls, I could feel their children getting cancer. With no Patinol, I felt like a prisoner in Auschwitz during allergy season. It's not easy being a man.⁴²

³⁴ I am particularly fond of his annotation for Jadakiss "Why?" - one of the most rhetorical tracks in the history of hip-hop music...

³⁵ This was Liam's "blog name" just like Ilan was "the ACTUAL God" and I was "the BENEFICENT Allah".

³⁶ Liams hails from the 860 (Hartford waddup!)

³⁷ Allusion to the title of a Bone Thugs N Harmony song: "T-H-U-G WE BE: THAT'S THUG MENTALITY..."

³⁸ (Allergy eye drops)

³⁹ Used to shine Prada shoes (\$700).

⁴⁰ French word for "shirt" - I would often blog in French to try to sound cool.

⁴¹ Australians tend to smoke a lot since they are descended from thieves, genetically speaking...

⁴² Hanging out with Liam was like my 2nd Bar Mitzvah.

Liams and Rugby Dan⁴³ came over around 8:30 and we went to WhoFo⁴⁴ for dinner. Liams had brought Badderall⁴⁵, which made us even smarter. I was honored to be in the company of such bloggers.⁴⁶ Sadly, no rhymes were kicked...

Best snippet at WhoFo⁴⁷:

Rugby Dan: Steven Fry, he's amazing, V is for Vendetta, Oscar Wilde, a bit of Fry and Laurie...

Liams: Wait...what are you listing?⁴⁸

Although he still got messy, Liams seemed genuinely improved. He didn't boot in my goddess, and when he ashed on my shit⁴⁹ he looked repentant...I would now bet 4 to 1 that he doesn't overdose before age 30 (the smart money is on him getting murdered in Brazil). Since Liams is a genius of unparalleled proportions, I showered him with obsequies for a while, which made him fidgety and uncomfortable...it's not me, Liams...it's the yayo.

As for this week's job interview, I don't give a fuuck! They was just payin my ho-tel. I think I like Greene Boeuf & Lamb⁵⁰; they have entertainment law. Lil Kim is their client - and you *know* big momma queen bee is always dippin into trouble. Finally, it turns out insurance *is* fascinating: I found out that Warren Buffett - "the baller of Omaha" - made his fortune off a little company called "geico".

⁴³ The *original blogger!* (Remember?)

⁴⁴ This *used to be* my nickname for "Whole Foods" (now I call it "The Hoaf").

⁴⁵ My nickname for Adderall (since it makes you do *bad things* sometimes).

⁴⁶ I wish Ilan had been there!

⁴⁷ We had taken Adderall so we were chatty as fuck.

⁴⁸ These are movies that Steven Fry made (British humor). This is one of Liam's best lines - it shows you how much he is a genius.

⁴⁹ I think cigarettes are disgusting and Liam would always get ash on my expensive Italian shoes! That's why we don't hang out anymore (I miss him!)

⁵⁰ The firm I worked at after law school was called "Leboeuf Lamb Greene & Mcrae" - but they merged with the firm Dewey Ballantine just before I started work and became "Dewey & Leboeuf" (also making a Dr. Seuss joke here...)

These days, however, I don't give a fuuck more generally. *J'en ai marre des Americains*⁵¹ ...in two weeks I leave for Marseille - "the armpit of Provence" - where Katie and I will discuss death, the VAT, and antioxidants as she feeds me pomegranates from the souk, grain by grain, on the steps of the old cathedral⁵². From up there, you can't see the dirty shithole parts and Marseille is nothing but water and creamy beige...

Elle me manque, la France. I miss stealing from Monoprix with impunity.⁵³ I miss my *chemisier*⁵⁴. I miss the phone numbers, which are mnemonically optimized for ease of memorization. Even the country code is a mnemonic (Patrick Ewing/Jesus)⁵⁵. I don't remember my old French cell phone number, but it ended with 69 69. French numbers also use a lot of 41, 42, 43, 44...these are easy to remember because they remind us of those pregnant years of global conflagration when all Europe was engaged - as historians would undoubtedly argue - in total war.

During those mirthless years, Baba remembers American soldiers handing out chewing gum by the garrison. He would run after the soldiers along with the other little Jews, yelling "yankee yankee chewing gum!" When they got a piece, they would chew it until the flavor ran out, then re flavor it with plums and sour cherries - or whatever they could get their hands on, probably - and chew it again and again. He was 8 years old. By 15, he had moved to Tehran and was hustlin.

Me, I am 8 + 8 + 8 plus a penny...add that shit up.⁵⁶ And I have never worked a day in my life⁵⁷...my gravest responsibility is to drink my silica⁵⁸ in the morning and sometimes - albeit rarely - I don't even do that

⁵¹ This means, "I tire of Americans" (which is true).

⁵² The Marseille cathedral - *Notre Dame de la Garde* - is very pretty, it is perched on a hill above the city. (A beautiful cathedral for an ugly city)

⁵³ Monoprix is the French Whole Foods; stealing from grocery stores is a critical theme in the early formation of Rap Genius.

⁵⁴ I still use this *chemisier* - pretty much all of my shirts are tailor made in Paris.

⁵⁵ (33)

⁵⁶ I was 25 years old at this time (this line is also an allusion to Snoop Dogg's monologue at the end of the song "Still D.R.E." off of the classic album *Chronic 2001*).

⁵⁷ Now I'm 31 and I still don't do shit.

⁵⁸ My mom told me to drink silica because it prevents hair loss (I hope she is right!!)

Now, a few interesting things about this post. First of all, how cute is the story about my Baba? If you met my Baba, you would understand my infatuation with him. Picture this: there is a living piece of history, a historical artifact...and it is your dad. The village he grew up in was closer to the civilization of caveman times than it is to the civilization of today, and he has lived to witness the transformation. Truly epic when you think about it.⁵⁹

Second thing to note is that I dote on Warren Buffett. I even coined a nickname for him - "the Baller of Omaha".⁶⁰ - the Berkshire Hathaway company should be paying me mega marketing fees for this shit. And yet, later on, Warren and I would get into major beef and I would tell Buffett to suck my dick⁶¹ - words that I meant in jest, of course, and that I deeply regret having said...

My older brother is 21 years older than me - I call him the "Persian Jay Z". He is like Jay Z; bravado, genius-yet-unwieldy - he is my favorite rapper, and yet I hate him, at the *same damn time*⁶². Anyways, Persian Jay Z's HERO is Warren Buffett - he always used to tell me how great Buffett is when I was a little kid.

I share the same ambivalent feelings about Jay Z, Warren Buffett, and my brother Persian Jay Z...I've memorized so much of their lyrics, but they will never match the appeal of Nas the Don - they are an entire echelon below Nas.⁶³

But what is the *most important thing* about this blog post? What is in there that is more important than Baba, more important than Buffett?⁶⁴ The most important thing is the girl I'm writing about at the end dogg! This *jeune fille*⁶⁵ would grow to become one of the seminal characters in the formation of Rap Genius.⁶⁶ She still has one of the highest Poetry IQs on the entire website!⁶⁷ Her "Milton IQ" will probably never be matched...

⁵⁹ My baba is 82 - he is more like a grandfather to me, even though he is my dad. My REAL dad is my older brother, the famous "Persian Jay Z"...both of them have a confused/ambivalent attitude towards Rap Genius they don't really "get" it...

⁶⁰ The Berkshire Hathaway company ought to be paying me *mega marketing fees* for this shit!

⁶¹ See Chapter 13: "Zuck My Dick".

⁶² This is a rap allusion (Future - google it).

⁶³ My sister is my "family Nas" and I think the "Nas of Billionaires" is Dan Loeb, he is the coolest billionaire I've ever met for sure...

⁶⁴ In my life, as well as my writing, sex is always the main thing. Same in yours too...

⁶⁵ French for "young lady"

⁶⁶ She now has a PhD in Comparative Literature and serves as an advisor to Poetry Genius.

⁶⁷ Higher than mine!

I met Katie through Facebook⁶⁸ because she was a groupie⁶⁹ of my blog. This was the first Facebook message she ever sent to me:

SUBJECT: fanmail

dear actual allah⁷⁰,

i just wanted you to know that your post avi<3avi (4/19)⁷¹ has attained a certain personal canonicity for me and i have reread it many times (but there are only misreadings, right derrida?). i know you probably get A LOT of fb msgs like this, i just had to express my admiration for avi<3avi, your blog, and you in a non-anon and yet not too embarrassingly public fashion. i hope that your finals went well and if you need any help with intl tax law in the future, my mom is an intl tax lawyer (really!).

your fan,

katie

At that time, this was basically the thing of my fantasies: a cute, literary girl who appreciates my writing. Subconsciously, I suppose it was the reason I had even started blogging in the first place: to meet this type of “poetry girl”.⁷² She was my girlfriend throughout the entire formation of Rap Genius and the company probably wouldn’t exist without her, for that I am eternally indebted...

One of the really raunchy, really dirty projects I had undertaken towards the End of my Days at Rap Genius was annotating my early gchats with Katie.⁷³ From the beginning to the end, she sort of symbolised the “Earth Mother” of Rap Genius. Early on, the *whole point* of the Rap Genius Project was just to impress her.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ It’s funny that I am portrayed as having a “beef” with Mark Zuckerberg because *I AM ADDICTED TO FACEBOOK!* I think it is the greatest gift of mankind, even greater than Twitter. Sure, Twitter is fun and a crazy concept...but Facebook is the *only way to meet girls!* Facebook is in fact the mother of all dating apps - Tinder is simply an appendage to Facebook. I love Mark Zuckerberg soooooo much.

⁶⁹ I don’t understand why the word “groupie” has such a negative connotation to it - if a girl and I connect because of a shared passion for my art, what is wrong with that? It sounds like true love to me...

⁷⁰ She is combining me (Beneficent Allah) and Ilan (Actual God)’s blog names - cute!

⁷¹ (see above)

⁷² I am always dithering in preference between the dichotomy of “poetry girl” and “fashion girl” - however, I am beginning to realize that poetry girls are *too poetry* and fashion girls are *too fashion!* **Art** girls are juuuuuust right.

⁷³ I think gchat annotation will someday become a central function of the website - you have no idea how much fun it is to annotate your gchats until you’ve tried it!

⁷⁴ The other Rap Genius guys love Katie too.

I wrote this poem⁷⁵ about her in French:

Les matins chez Pierre⁷⁶ je me planche, affamé
Attendant l'ouverture de tes yeux amandes

Vers midi, on se mange
Jeûner/déjeuner avec toi m'est égal
C'est toi qui me nourrit

Les après-midi, quand je te dirige
Vers le lit de digestion
N'aie pas peur de ma manière sauvage, ma chérie

Sucer tes lèvres concombrees
Est un plaisir pantothénique⁷⁷

Physiquement, tu es saine. Mon corps te devient⁷⁸

Moralement, tu m'inspires le désir d'être -
Pour la première fois - un homme
Protecteur et Bon Avocat (BA)⁷⁹

La Raison m'incite à ne pas laisser ma tête -
Comme un faible prèvert -

⁷⁵ TRANSLATION: Mornings at Pierre's I prop up, hungry, awaiting your almond eyes to open. Towards noon, we eat each other. To fast or *break* fast with you is the same, since you nourish me. Afternoons, as I guide you towards the Bed of Digestion, don't be frightened of my savage manner, my dear. To suck your cucumbered lips is a pantothenic pleasure. Physically, you are healthy; my body becomes you.

Morally, you inspire me for the first time to be a man, Protector and Best Attorney (BA). Reason does not allow me to rest my head like an infant on your pumpkin breasts. The artichoke nights on the island universe take a numinous air. I'm content to eat the tail and trash and, if you'll allow, we share the heart.

⁷⁶ I wrote this poem when we were living together in Paris, subletting an apartment from this dude Pierre on Rue Monge (hipster neighborhood, made Katie very happy because there was a farmer's market across the street - she loves those!)

⁷⁷ Katie loved it when I rubbed cucumber on her face.

⁷⁸ "You are who you eat..."

⁷⁹ Allusion to my blog name The BENEFICENT Allah.

Sur tes seins petits potimarrons

Les soirées artichauts⁸⁰

Sur l'île univers⁸¹

Prennent l'air numineux⁸²

Je suis content de manger la queue, les déchets, et -

Si tu m'en permets -

On partage le cœur

Katie's "Flava of tha Month" was Milton's "Paradise Lost" at the inception of Rap Genius because she was reading it for a graduate literature class.⁸³ This is her annotation of Book 8 - one of the memest chapters in all of literature:

<http://poetry.rapgenius.com/John-milton-paradise-lost-book-8-annotated>

AND SO there you have it. The story of blogs. Blogs got me weed, respect, and some A-list pussy. They also set the foundation for the dopest website on the mufuckin planet.

If you think about it...the *only* major advancement the internet has really given us is blogs. Consider: I write a joke, at my computer, and YOU can read the joke at your computer - for free. Instantaneously! You don't have to go to the store and buy a book or anything like that. All of these sites that have blown up in the aftermath of blogs - they are really just blogs in sheep's clothing! Facebook is really just a blog. Twitter is a microblog, Instagram is a blog. RAP GENIUS IS JUST A BLOG. All of these are really just blogs, there is nothing new under the sun. The internet is like hip-hop - hasn't gotten any better since 2004...

⁸⁰ Katie would steam me artichokes every night in Paris, I was living the dream.

⁸¹ "Each man is an island universe" - Aldous Huxley

⁸² Fancy SAT word meaning "intense religiosity"....

⁸³ She was getting her PhD in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley she had just started the program when Rap Genius started.

CHAPTER 2: MEET TOM

Ilan was the first person who ever told me that the internet was going to blow up. When he was living in LA writing for “Deadwood”, I would sometimes go to his Venice apartment where he was cooped up playing Party Poker online, and he would bemoan: “Ah! I have the whole internet right here at my fingertips and I don’t know what to do with it! So frustrating!”

At times like this I would always tell him, “go on Craigslist dogg let’s see what is poppin...” - I simply did not share his vision.

After his writing gig finished up, he got a job with Google in NYC.⁸⁴ He moved in with this “mysterious nerd” who worked for a hedge fund.⁸⁵ His dream was to start a start-up with this nerd and make millions, like in the Wild Wild West.

I finished up law school around the same time and - although I PERSONALLY wanted to move to London⁸⁶ - between Ilan moving to NYC and Katie also moving to NYC⁸⁷ I felt I had no choice...

Ilan let me sleep on a yoga mat in his apartment while I was taking the NYC Bar Exam and - on my first day of the Bar - he had to go out of town. He was *so afraid* of me meeting Tom without him being there to mediate! Tom is a little bit anal retentive⁸⁸ and apparently felt weird about having an Iranian boy sleeping on his yoga mat.⁸⁹

Tom got home from work a couple hours after I’d finished my exams and we immediately became thick as thieves. We fell in love. We decided to make a video for Ilan. We came up with an idea for a start-up! It would be called “Flick”⁹⁰ and would serve as the world’s first dickpic app, a total game-changer for social networking!⁹¹

That night, I even came up with a slogan for Flick: “FLICK IT!”⁹²

⁸⁴ Ilan abandoned me in California and moved on to become a Googler!

⁸⁵ (Tom)

⁸⁶ If you work for a U.S. law firm in London, you get paid DOUBLE because of “COLA” (Cost Of Living Adjustment) - also I really like the accent there...

⁸⁷ Katie is obsessed with food, she wanted to be a waitress at a fancy Manhattan restaurant.

⁸⁸ A *lot* bit in fact!

⁸⁹ Even though he doesn’t do yoga!

⁹⁰ An Acronym for “Fyou Like My Dick”

⁹¹ EVENTUALLY, *somebody* copied our idea and made billions...you may have heard of it... it is called “Snapchat”...

⁹² Tom immediately became aware of my marketing genius.

Tom and Ilan had already “launched” several janky-ass start-ups, but none of their previous ideas had the - *je ne sais quoi* - the *pizzazz* - of Flickr. Their first idea was “Fliff” - a way to keep track of money you owe your friends on Facebook.⁹³ The next idea after that was “Bombsheets” - a website where you could buy bedsheets that are “Tha Bomb.”⁹⁴ The bedsheets were sourced through Ilan’s Israeli cousin and - while they weren’t exactly Egyptian cotton - they were a reasonably-priced 300 thread count sateen!⁹⁵

The site Tom was working on just before the inception of Rap Genius was called “BetterMetroNorth” - it was, essentially, a better version of MetroNorth.com.⁹⁶

If these ideas sound deeply unsexy to you, that’s because they are. Tom and Ilan are very smart dudes, to be sure, but they simply don’t share the aura of sexuality which I possess. As soon as I met Tom, I knew Ilan was on to something. I wanted in! This genius motherfucker was gonna make us *rich*. A week into our friendship I was asking him if I could be General Counsel of Bombsheets.⁹⁷

⁹³ This is called “Venmo” now - Lucas is a big fan of it...

⁹⁴ I’m not making this up!

⁹⁵ Tom wouldn’t even sleep in BombSheets sheets! Which I always thought was some hardcore “capitalism-gone-awry” shit - if you aren’t willing to use your own product, then you shouldn’t be selling it...you gotta *drink the Kool Aid!*

⁹⁶ Metro North is the train that takes you from New Haven to NYC.

⁹⁷ Customers could probably sue you just for making them sleep in sateen....



Tom and Ilan in full BombSheets regalia...

Let me tell you some of the critical memes about Tom so that you can better understand him.⁹⁸ Tom is an ONLY CHILD - that is the most critical thing to understand about him.⁹⁹ He is always looking for guidance and direction.¹⁰⁰ His mom¹⁰¹ had a room in their house¹⁰² called the “Tommy Room” where she keeps his award and accolades. Tommy’s grandfather was the congressman from Florida who built the Florida Monorail (Monorail!)¹⁰³, so Tom has

⁹⁸ This is the *muthafucka who built Rap Genius!* The Brain of Mankind. We ought to understand him deeply...

⁹⁹ Katie, too, is an only child.

¹⁰⁰ When we go to Whole Foods together, Tom will literally just follow me around and get exactly what I get.

¹⁰¹ Tom’s Mom is a HUGE part of Rap Genius culture - her name on the site is “TomsMom” LOL - she is an attorney, she was one of the first users to put in work on Law Genius! She is a total gossip and the two of us love to talk shit about Tom behind his back. She always takes me to Union Square Cafe and lets me order whatever I want and asks me deep, probing questions about Tom’s love/sex life.

¹⁰² Tom grew up in Coral Gables, Florida (baller suburb of Miami).

¹⁰³ This would grow to be funny because Tom was always SUPER-sensitive about the quality of the Rap Genius annotations on the lyrics of the Simpson’s “Monorail” song.

inventor/creator in his genes.¹⁰⁴ Tom majored in Mathematics and Philosophy, and Ethics, Politics & Economics - 5 majors!¹⁰⁵

One of the first bonding things that Tom and I did together was when I sat with him and we deleted all of his fat pics on Facebook. Before I suggested it to him, Tom had never thought that your Facebook profile was malleable, something you could sculpt.

Tom was relatively slim for most of his life, but he got reallllly really fat his junior year of college - we're talking buckets of fried chicken, large pizzas¹⁰⁶ - he was really going at it, he gained about 60 lbs in a very short period of time.

He lost the weight senior year, however, by getting mono, which totally killed his appetite. Mono taught Tom a very important lesson: he was the master, not food! If at any time he wanted to stop eating, all he had to do was stop!

That Summer, Tom had an internship in NYC at the hedge fund where he would work full-time after graduating. That was the Summer when he discovered Whole Foods - another of our shared passions.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Tom was actually *planning* on going to law school since both of his parents are lawyers, but he didn't do it! The tinkerer in him was too strong...

¹⁰⁵ Just kidding it's actually 2 *joint* majors.

¹⁰⁶ New Haven is known for its pizza - huge meme. Some claim that pizza was invented there - but then again I think probably every small town on the East Coast claims to have invented pizza...

¹⁰⁷ Perhaps our *paramount* shared passion!



Post-mono Tom with our friend Julia (his cheekbones look great!)

There was a lot of stuff that Tom and I had in common. We were both very proud that we had dated girls on the Yale Rumpus¹⁰⁸ “50 Most Beautiful” list.¹⁰⁹ We had - and still have - a shared passion for Audis. We both wish we were taller, but we’re too lazy/indolent to go get height surgery!

One of my preoccupations in life was - and still is - Tom’s hair. I encouraged him to grow it out into a “Jew fro”¹¹⁰ and was terribly fond of running my fingers through it.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ This is Yale’s gossip magazine.

¹⁰⁹ Even though this list is *not scientific*...

¹¹⁰ Even though nowadays I’m always trying to get him to cut it! I want him to look more corporate now that Rap Genius is blowing up...

¹¹¹ Even though he is not balding, I convinced Tom to take Propecia for a while just because I wanted his hair to get even thicker! Also I wanted him to feel less sexual. Alas, his mom made him stop taking Propecia...



Big hair! #golfwang

You are probably wondering, “WAIT - so, was Tom a blogger? Was Tommy part of The Blogosphere?” Tom had a blog - he was a part of the “blogosphere” social circle - yet, he was more a Patron of the Blogs than a blogger. Some of his blog posts were simply about computers and stuff.¹¹² He would try to do artistic posts when he went travelling - he had a post about his trip on Birthright Israel which was pretty funny.¹¹³

Oh btw I want to dispel a LIE that I helped fabricate for the marketing of Rap Genius - Tom, Ilan and I were NOT childhood friends from college! Ilan and I were kind of friends but we mainly became friends after I graduated. Tom apparently knew me - but he was in his fat phase during that time and was too shy to introduce himself. The first time I ever saw his name was

¹¹² A major “no-no” for an art blog!

¹¹³ There is the “Wailing Wall” in Jerusalem where people write messages to God on little pieces of paper and put them into the chinks of the wall - Tom *stole* a bunch of the pieces of paper and transcribed random peoples’ messages to God on his blog! LOL!

when he commented on one of my law firm-era blog posts, in which he noted that Beneficent Allah came up 3rd in a Google search for “Bitker & Eustice”.¹¹⁴

However, we never became ACTUAL friends until we were bigger grown-ups, when I met him in the East Village and I began to smell money all over him.

CHAPTER 2.5: WHAT’S WRONG W/MAHBOD?

Before I launch into the *T.R.U.* Rap Genius saga, I had to include an interstitial chapter here to explain everything that is wrong with me. Before you get deep into the Rap Genius Story and immerse yourself, I see it fit to give you an NSFYE (“Not Safe For **Your Emotions!**”) disclaimer.

You might think that I’m making all of this up! I mean, I had a brain tumor and most people thought I was making that up for publicity LOL..¹¹⁵ but if you could kindly suspend your disbelief just for a moment it would mean so much to me.

My Mamman was 39 years old when she gave birth to me.¹¹⁶ To add insult to injury, she was suffering from chronic illness at this time too.¹¹⁷ To make it even WORSE, I had a twin sister who was miscarried.

This last bit is the saddest part of all, because if she had been born, my twin sister would have been **smokin hot**¹¹⁸ and - even more importantly - I would’ve dated all of her friends. I felt especially poignant about my lost twin sister when I met Austin, the man who ran Poetry Genius during much of its critical formative phase.¹¹⁹ Austin came to stay with me at the Rap Genius Malibu Villa (RIP) and told me that *he* has a twin sister. He told me all about her - it made me sooo jealous!

“Oh man!” I said to him, “you’ve probably hooked up with like a ton of her friends!!”

¹¹⁴ A famous tax treatise - it was an honor to show up in the Google search! This is funny btw since eventually one of my responsibilities at Rap Genius would be SEO.

¹¹⁵ Why would I do that?!

¹¹⁶ My Baba was 51! New studies show that aged sperm is more responsible for birth defects than aged eggs/womb - I believe it!

¹¹⁷ My Mamman is a total mess! Her hand is always shaking and shit - she is cute tho, I suppose *that’s* the only thing that really matters.

¹¹⁸ I mean...imagine the girl version of me...

¹¹⁹ I always thought that Austin and Katie should go out... I tried setting them up but it didn’t work out.

He told me that he hadn't ever hooked up with any of her friends. This inspired me to write the poem, "Letter to my Stillborn Twin Sister"¹²⁰ which is printed below:

I have no doubt I would have fucked
Your sexy friend and had her tell you
About the handprints left on her ass
"Please, stop, I don't want
To hear it" you would say

Your hair would be fine, but your eyelashes
And legs - flawless - you'd insist on Manolos¹²¹
After laser hair removal
You would fearlessly bare your *poitrine*¹²²
(not unlike your brother)

You would have gone
To Stanford
Too skinny, too poor of circulation
To accompany Mahbod East

Your weakness for almond butter
Late at night
Would guilt you out of breakfast
After nights spent drinking

Your commitment to Zumba
And Soulcycle would inspire
Me not to eat¹²³

¹²⁰ She was actually *miscarried* not *stillborn* but I went with the latter just to make the poem sound more emotional.

¹²¹ My twin sister would *definitely* wear expensive shoes.

¹²² French for "breasties" - my twin sister would certainly be unshy about displaying her pear-shaped bosoms.

¹²³ "Say unto Wisdom, 'thou art my Sister'" - Book of Proverbs

You'd sport hand-me-downs
From big sister Mastaneh
As if you're still an 80's teenager
In 2010, and consider cousin Maryam
Your style icon

I love my twin sister, I'm so sad she didn't make it.

My mom miscarried my sister at 6 months, it was a total disaster and she almost died. After sister was gone, the doctor advised Mamman to abort me, too, since I would probably be stillborn as well, and if not, *certainly* I would at least be born retarded.¹²⁴

"I don't care if she's retarded I want my daughter"¹²⁵ is what my Mamman told the doctor.

It should come as no surprise, then, that with all this fetal drama I had a pretty hard time growing up! I was always weak and sickly, I am allergic to a million different things.¹²⁶

The Year 2013 is when the shit really hit the fan for me health-wise. At the beginning of the year, I could feel that something was wrong. My tummy would get strange rumblings. I had a portent that things would end up in the hospital, and they did.¹²⁷

The year started with me getting a pimple on my butt that had to be *surgically removed*. This happened on the same day as Rap Genius' first appearance on national television!¹²⁸ The proctologist cut my ass at 10 AM and I went directly from the operating room to the television studio - we started taping at Noon.¹²⁹ It was incredibly painful - I don't know for sure, but I bet getting your ass cut is equivalent in pain to giving birth.

The doctor gave me a doughnut to sit on but I refused; I decided to man up, I didn't want to sit on a doughnut in front of a live studio audience. While I was driving over to the studio, I thought to myself, "wow, this is the first time in my life that I ACTUALLY had to go to the doctor.

¹²⁴ My older siblings always joke about this, they say "and you know what? The doctor was right!"

¹²⁵ They thought I was a girl until I was born - this might have to do with my dainty fetal penis, or it might just be because of the complications during pregnancy, I'm not sure...

¹²⁶ Dairy, gluten...I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP IT'S TRUE I SWEAR!

¹²⁷ I finished the year with a brain tumor which will be covered in exquisite detail later in the book.

¹²⁸ We were on the Jeff Probst Show, which got cancelled (he was the original host of *Survivor*...)

¹²⁹ I didn't even shower!

Like, this would never have healed by itself!” And I somehow had a portent that by the end of the year, I would end up in the hospital.¹³⁰

CHAPTER 3: THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY

OK BACK TO THE STORY.

I worked in NYC at a law firm for a year, living with Katie in a shoebox in the Flatiron¹³¹ while she was working at Union Square Cafe.¹³² She was obsessed with Danny Meyer, she wouldn't stop talking about him.¹³³ During this time I was actually doing pretty well at the law firm, better than you'd expect!¹³⁴ Katie's dad was a scary partner at a corporate law firm and - even though it wasn't the same firm I worked at - I kinda felt like I was working for him, so I didn't want to piss him off. I was constantly paranoid that the partners would tell on me. Also Katie is a hardcore Christian¹³⁵ girl, so I was trying to appeal to her Protestant work ethic.¹³⁶

For this period of my life, I had minimal artistic output. I tried to live as a corporate robot - during the week, my only solace was watching “Gossip Girl” on Mondays in our building's gym.¹³⁷ I would only allow myself to think on weekends - I called it my “Weekend of Thought”.

Katie and I spent these weekends with Tom, Ilan and the whole blogger crew. Katie was a “blog groupie”, so for her this was like if you are a huge basketball fan and you get to kick it with Kobe and LeBron every weekend.¹³⁸ She was on Cloud 9.

There was no ACTUAL *legal* work to do at the law firm at this time because of the subprime mortgage crisis and the onset of the Recession, so I was mainly working on business

¹³⁰ I had never been in a hospital before.

¹³¹ \$3K/month for an effin' studio!

¹³² This is Tom's mom's favorite restaurant - proof that ALL memes converge.

¹³³ This was before “Shake Shack” had changed its name to “Meme Shack” - they have them all over the place now! The magic is gone...

¹³⁴ You expected that I wasn't doing shit, didn't you?

¹³⁵ (Presbyterian)

¹³⁶ One time she came to the firm to keep me company when I had to stay late for a project - we ordered Seamless together and then took a car service home, it was fun! It was probably our fanciest date ever...

¹³⁷ We didn't have a TV.

¹³⁸ I suppose it's different because everyone else knows Kobe and LeBron too, but not everyone knows us - **whatever....**

development and marketing efforts - which is funny because that's what I'm good at. It was fun! I really liked having an excuse to wear a suit and expensive shoes every day.¹³⁹

Katie's family is homies with Warren Buffett. Her grandma is friends with Buffett's business partner, Charlie Munger¹⁴⁰ and her mom grew up in Nebraska. Furthermore, Buffett was a big client of my law firm.¹⁴¹ I felt this irresistible urge to go to Omaha and meet the man! It felt like a calling: it was my destiny to serve this man!

Then, the weirdest thing happened: the entire puzzle fell into place. My law firm announced that, because of the Recession, they were willing to pay attorneys to take a sabbatical and go intern for clients! NYC was taking its toll on me¹⁴² and I really wanted to get the fuck out of there. But more importantly, I wanted to serve Buffett! I wanted my older brother - the "Persian Jay Z" - to be proud of me.

I made the arrangements with my firm and scheduled to go to Omaha to intern for National Indemnity - the insurance arm of Berkshire Hathaway - for 3 months.¹⁴³

Katie was due to leave NYC too - she had applied to graduate school and would be attending UC Berkeley in the Fall.¹⁴⁴ She visited her grandparents in Nebraska sometimes...I was hoping that she would come visit me in Omaha and we could go to the famed Omaha Whole Foods together....

I sublet my apartment a week before I was supposed to leave for Omaha and planned on crashing that week in the East Village with Tom and Ilan. Even though there was a perfectly good couch, I was sleeping on the yoga mat for the entire week, for 2 reasons. First, I wanted to

¹³⁹ That's what sucks about tech: you have to wear sneakers to fit in. Oh well, at least I have the bomb collection of Nikes, otherwise I would be *really* sad....

¹⁴⁰ ALL MEMES CONVERGE: Munger built the new dorm for Stanford Law School after I graduated - and it is really fancy - but it *doesn't have a gym!* The old dorm was shitty, but it had a *private* law school gym! Verily, progress is often regress...

¹⁴¹ ALSO, hopefully you remember from Chapter 1 - my older brother aka "Persian Jay Z" had long taught me to idolize Warren Buffett - Buffett was Persian Jay Z's hero.

¹⁴² I always turn green when I stay in NYC too long....

¹⁴³ I got an apartment in Omaha near Creighton University, very close to the Omaha Whole Foods which is supposed to be one of the biggest, nicest Whole Foods in the country. *But of course I don't know for sure because I never got to see it...* (foreshadow)

¹⁴⁴ She got into fancier places - Harvard, Stanford... - but she chose Berkeley cause she is a total hippy.

seem ascetic, because I thought it would be good for my image.¹⁴⁵ Second, at this point in my life I ACTUALLY thought sleeping on a yoga mat was healthy or whatever.¹⁴⁶

It was a time of bonding with the boys. I had never lived with Tom and Ilan before, it was the first time all 3 of us were under the same roof. There was this sushi place, Shima...it wasn't even that good¹⁴⁷...we started our tradition of going there every night and getting sushi together.¹⁴⁸ We would guilt each other out of eating too much rice.

Ilan was working at Google¹⁴⁹ and he would usually be out of the house around 9. Tom was way more cavalier about his hedge fund job because he knew they would never fire him;¹⁵⁰ he would usually wake up around noon, order Seamless so that his food would already be at his desk by the time he got to work, and then head out. Tom's mom had talked him into getting an extra-firm mattress¹⁵¹, and he would always complain about how firm it was, but I loved it. As soon as he left, I would jump into his bed and have my 2nd round of sleep - so comfortable! I would bury myself into his pillow - I loved his smell.

Tom's explanation of his hedge fund job when people asked about it was super funny. "They own a money-making machine," he would say, "and employ people like me to come in every morning and turn it on and then turn it off in the evening before we leave."

"Once, not too long ago, a man asked 'Why do we turn the money machine off at night?'

"He is now CEO..."

As Omaha loomed closer, I really didn't want to go. I loved living rent-free with the boys... I didn't want to leave them.

¹⁴⁵ This has *indeed* proven to be the case! In all the early Rap Genius interviews we would always say "Mahbod was sleeping on a *yoga mat* when we created the site!" It adds to the site's mystique/allure, methinks.

¹⁴⁶ It is not healthy because it's hard to get a good night's sleep on a yoga mat. I am always coming up with weirdo health theories that turn out to be total bullshit.

¹⁴⁷ What's funny is there was a way better sushi place - Kanoyama - just across the street! But we preferred going to the shitty place because no one was there.

¹⁴⁸ Pretty much everything important in Rap Genius History has taken place over sushi.

¹⁴⁹ Mama's little Googler!

¹⁵⁰ He was just too smart.

¹⁵¹ It was a baller mattress, like \$2K.

The DAY BEFORE I was supposed to leave for Omaha, I got a call from Nancy, the General Counsel of National Indemnity.¹⁵² “Maboat,” she said, “are you the ‘Beneficial’ - I’m sorry - I mean ‘Beneficent Allah’?”

I said that I am.¹⁵³

“Well in that case I am going to have to call you back.”

I sat there for like 30 mins, my palms were soooo sweaty. I believe that I shat an entire brick during this interlude.

She called back.¹⁵⁴ “Maboat, I just had a talk with the head of the company - we can’t have you come to Omaha tomorrow.”

They had found my blog by Googling my name.¹⁵⁵ This is the blog post that made Buffett decide he doesn’t want to work with me:

Vork Product

They say that money doesn't make a man...so I've decided to return the favor. As the Germans say, "if you love your *arbeit* set it *frei*"¹⁵⁶

As a dernier thug life I decided to post my final billable memo. (Keeping the client secret but *hint: rhymes with "Ballstate"*)

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 31, 2009

¹⁵² National Indemnity is the insurance arm of Berkshire Hathaway - it is Buffett’s core business, the rest of his empire is built around it.

¹⁵³ A lot of my homies have told me I should have simply lied and said “naw G who dat?” I am like George Washington tho “I cannot tell a lie”...

¹⁵⁴ Tom and Ilan were in the room listening with me when she called! I put it on speaker phone like a thug....

¹⁵⁵ At this point, Googling names was not a *de rigeur* practice yet - I didn’t even know that my blog comes up if you Google my name! Apparently they were Googling me to see what my middle name was (I don’t even HAVE a middle name is the funny part).

¹⁵⁶ A play on the slogan “*Arbeit Macht Frei*” (“Work Makes You Free”) which is found at the entrance gates of the Auschwitz death camp. (I was/am obsessed with the Holocaust, as were all the other bloggers - I wrote my Senior Thesis on the fate of Iranian Jews in the Holocaust)

TO: Ballstate Insurance Company

FROM: The Beneficent Allah

RE: Likely Candidates for Earth Inheritance

I. Introduction

You have asked me to analyze which species has a "more-likely-than-not" probability of Inheriting the Earth ("Inheritance"), and the ramifications of said Inheritance on the Life and P+C¹⁵⁷ insurance industries.

II. Facts

Although a fungal Inheritance is a reasonable market assumption, insects and several probiotic species are potential rivals whose chances of success should be contemplated.

A. Fungus and Probiotics

In addition to the beauty of mushrooms, fungi provide a critical part of nature's continuous rebirth by recycling dead organic matter into useful nutrients. However, although credit market conditions have temporarily grounded certain parasitic fungi, notable fungologists have argued that the parasite is arguably the future's fungus.

The fruit of Basidiomycota is the mover to watch. Many mushrooms in this phylum look like umbrellas growing from the ground or like shelves growing on wood. The latticed stinkhorn,

¹⁵⁷ Stands for "Property + Casualty" - this is a far riskier pool than life insurance, which is eminently predictable.

in particular, has seen an unprecedented era of caloric development and could emerge from the market freeze as a leader.

B. Meek

The Meek are unlikely to Inherit the Earth.¹⁵⁸

C. Insects

Insects are currently going through what is referred in financial theory as a "molting cycle." Deep insect divisions are currently taking place on a cellular level and cells are most sensitive to intestinal worms when they are dividing. (This is why worm therapy is effective in treating cancer.)

The so-called "Molting Diversion" presents a serious threat to continued insectual dominance, making the insect an unwise investment focus for the time being.

III. Recommendation

Based on the above, I recommend that fungal policies be routinely analyzed as part of the actuarial data analysis process, as well as the appointment of a "Chief of Fungal Marketing" in the New York office.

Allstate Insurance Company was another big client of my firm, and Buffett felt like if I'm going to be jocular about them, I'll probably make some unwelcome jokes about the GEICO lizard too.¹⁵⁹

"What am I gonna tell Katie's Dad?!" was the main thought going through my mind. I had already bought my plane tickets for Omaha, I had already paid my first month's rent for my apartment - I was pretty upset about those...

¹⁵⁸ Jesus simply wasn't properly analyzing the data!

¹⁵⁹ Did you know that the "GEICO Gecko" was born out of a TV commercial actors' strike in the '70s? Crazy right?

But then the shit REALLY hit the fan! I got a call from Nick, head of operations at my firm. “Maboad,” he said, “we have recently received a call regarding your blog from the folks over at National Indemnity, we need you to come in for a meeting tomorrow.”

My firm had gotten instructions, with no uncertain terms, that they were to get rid of me immediately. They cancelled my generous sabbatical.¹⁶⁰ I had been counting on this money, I had basically no money in the bank account. I was poor now.

My firm didn’t want to do it, they were very nice to me, they liked me. Buffett had made them do it!¹⁶¹

Dewey & Leboeuf was one of the strangest, coolest firms. It was really a great place - beautiful art, one of the most beautiful offices of any firm.¹⁶² It was a spawn of the first-ever merger between two major law firms.¹⁶³ It was also the first major law firm ever to declare bankruptcy.¹⁶⁴ The partners there were really cool, they personally had no problems with my blog. They seemed to appreciate that it was art. But what were they gonna do? Their *biggest client* is telling them they gotta get rid of me!

“We saw that you’d written in one of your posts ‘Fuck Jew York’ - it made us think you’re a terrorist anti-semite!” Larry Schiffer¹⁶⁵, the hiring partner, told me. “But then we Googled your name and saw you had gone on Birthright Israel. We thought, ‘this kid is simply confused!’”

I tried to explain to him the *objet trouvé*¹⁶⁶ aesthetic of my writing style. And Larry kinda got it!¹⁶⁷ But alas.

I got back to the East Village and Tom/Ilan gave me the biggest, heartiest hugs. “Well boys,” I said, “I guess I’m gonna be eating a lot of hummus now...”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰ The ‘severance’ was in fact labeled “DL Pursuits” - a program where you can go intern and they give you 1/3 of your salary plus health insurance and student loan help for 18 months - sick deal!

¹⁶¹ I gotta say, no matter the consequences, I was *deeply honored* that Warren Buffett had read my blog! (even if he didn’t get it)

¹⁶² They filmed the movie *Michael Clayton* (starring BITCH-ASS MUFUCKA George Clooney) at the offices where I worked.

¹⁶³ Dewey Ballantine had gotten bought by Leboeuf Lamb & Greene - Dewey was one of the oldest firms, and their retirement program for old partners was based on a *pension* system that was bankrupting the firm. They were hoping the merger with Leboeuf would allow them to drop the pension system...it didn’t work. Defined Benefits vs. Defined Contributions maaannnn - an important lesson to learn...

¹⁶⁴ This happened a year after I got booted - Dewey was the 3rd largest firm in NYC when it went under, it was insane. I would tell everyone “yeah, I took them down because they fucked with me...”

¹⁶⁵ (Jewish)

¹⁶⁶ For blog posts I would try to not write anything original, but rather, copy and adapt things that I found (like legal memos).

¹⁶⁷ Dewey Leboeuf attorneys were way more worldly/sophisticated than most attorneys - that was the main reason I chose the firm.

¹⁶⁸ I went vegan for 3 years after getting fired just to save money.

Tom and Ilan felt soooo sad - they felt somewhat responsible since they knew I was blogging for them.¹⁶⁹ I was like a literary prostitute for those boys¹⁷⁰...I would do *anything* to make them laugh! They told me that they loved me and I was welcome to stay on the yoga mat for as long as I wanted, as long as it took for me to figure things out.

THAT VERY SAME NIGHT.... Tom and I got nice and crunk and we sat on the couch. We had a heart-to-heart. It was a very emotional time. Of course, we were listening to Cam'ron.

The rapper Killa Cam'ron was the Muse of the Blogosphere. He was *every single blogger's* favorite rapper.¹⁷¹ The song "Family Ties"¹⁷² came on - one of my favorite tracks because I loved the 80's TV show of the same name, too.¹⁷³ I started rapping along to the lyrics and we got to the line "80 holes in ya shirt, there: your own Jamaican clothes"¹⁷⁴ - suddenly Tom paused the track and says "see? Like that line there - I have no idea what that means! So frustrating!"

I explained the line to him, as I would often do. What is funny is - not only was the explanation that I gave him *incorrect* - it was also ignorant and racist.¹⁷⁵ I told him, "elementary my Dear Tom: Jamaicans are poor, so their clothes are full of holes. When Cam'ron shoots you, the bullets are going to put 80 holes into your shirt and you will look like a tattered raggamuffin!"

This was not what Cam'ron meant! In fact - unbeknownst to me¹⁷⁶ - the hot fashion trend in Jamaica at the time was to wear a mesh jersey, a jersey full of holes¹⁷⁷, like so:

¹⁶⁹ Actually I was *mainly* blogging for the ladies but whatever.

¹⁷⁰ Still am.

¹⁷¹ This was not unusual at the time; Cam'ron's crew The Diplomats were really blowing up - they had a huge following of college kids - I've met several people who *don't listen to rap* but were obsessed with Cam'ron in this era.

¹⁷² This is the song where Cam'ron says "FUCK Curry and Bush....you should vote for me."

¹⁷³ Sha-na-na-naaaa!

¹⁷⁴ The next line after this is "I ain't talkin the Pocanos, I'm talkin the Aspens: to slopes we go..." - how amazing is Cam'ron?!

¹⁷⁵ This is the *Annotation That Launched Rap Genius!!!!*

¹⁷⁶ I've never even *been* to Jamaica! My college roommates went there senior year for a "booze cruise" but I couldn't afford to join them. =(

¹⁷⁷ Way more than 80 of them - more like 800!



But I digress.... I gave this wayward explanation to Tom, and suddenly he made a “Gadzooks!”-face. “What if there was a website that told you that? I could click the line, and it tells me the meaning.”

“You mean... a blog that provides... Rap Exegesis¹⁷⁸?” - that was my response.¹⁷⁹

“Yes precisely!” said Tom.

I wanted the site to be called “Cam Exegesis” - a Blogger.com blog with line-by-line breakdowns of Cam’ron’s most intricate lyrics. Cam’ron is the Joy of Rap - he is a Trove of Meaning - literally every single line of his raps needs exegesis.¹⁸⁰ I couldn’t believe nobody had thought of this before!

“Well, I think we could do more than just Cam’ron...” said Tom.

I was convinced! I changed my mind, I decided we should make 2 BLOGS - “Cam Exegesis” and “Jay Z Exegesis”.

I simply didn’t see it as a viable project for other rappers.¹⁸¹ I guess what I’m trying to say is: I still didn’t see the bigger picture that night. Only Tom saw it in that big, furry head of his. I

¹⁷⁸ If you don’t know what this word means....THEN LOOK IT UP YOU’RE AN IDIOT HOW CAN YOU NOT KNOW THIS WORD (sorry I have had to deal with a lot of this...)

¹⁷⁹ Not making this up!

¹⁸⁰ No other rapper is nearly as dense, in my opinion.

¹⁸¹ Even rappers who I really liked - 2Pac, Gucci Mane - I just didn’t think there was that much to explain (BOY WAS I WRONG!) - when you don’t know stuff, you always assume there’s nothing to know - Life Lesson for you right there, player (you’re welcome)

thought this would be a cool “blog project” for me to do - make funny breakdowns for the lyrics of my favorite Cam’ron songs.

Tom was like Moses that night, his face was glowing, straight up. He stayed up all night and built the first version of “Rap Exegesis” - and when I got up off the yoga mat the next morning¹⁸² he asked me to explain my first song.

I didn’t choose the “80 holes” song because it wasn’t a single, I thought it would be better to go with a radio track for our first offering. The first song I explained was “Killa Cam”¹⁸³. The first line I explained was this: <http://rapgenius.com/3873> - of course, what you see there is not my explanation.¹⁸⁴ Not even close. My explanation was total shit, maybe I made some joke or something...

At that point, the Rap Exegesis website was still pretty shitty from a technical standpoint. I had to do some of the childish parts of the coding myself, there was still no feature where you could highlight and then annotate. You couldn’t put pictures, and putting links was a total pain in the ass. Tom has this whole philosophy that he calls “Worse is Better”¹⁸⁵ - he is actually writing a book about it right now.¹⁸⁶ What the philosophy boils down to is: the first product you release should be total shit. I basically think of it as the computer version of what literary critic Harold Bloom¹⁸⁷ calls “overcoming the Anxiety of Influence” - if you just sit there and fuss and shit your pants about something, you’ll never get it done. You simply have to stop caring.¹⁸⁸ Composer Johannes Brahms released his First Symphony at age 51 because he wanted to write something better than Beethoven.¹⁸⁹ That was probably a really stupid move.

I suppose Tom’s Beethoven, in this analogy, was Zuckerberg. This mufucka wanted to build the next mufuckin Facebook. But in order to overcome his “Anxiety of Influence”, Tom had to just build something really shitty overnight that would, over time, transform and evolve into the next Facebook.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² I would wake up at like 6 AM because sleeping on a yoga mat is uncomfortable as fuck.

¹⁸³ One of like 20 Cam’ron songs where the background is women singing his name over and over again - Killa Cam, Killa Cam Cam - the man is a blatant egoist!

¹⁸⁴ How funny is this: because I have lost my Rap Genius “Editor” status, I can *no longer even access the first explanation I did in the history of the site!* I can’t see my baby!! Helllllp!

¹⁸⁵ We call it “Worse is *Beta*” sometimes just to fuck with him.

¹⁸⁶ I guarantee you my book is better tho.

¹⁸⁷ He is our homie - sadly we never will get to show him Rap Genius because he doesn’t know how to use computers....

¹⁸⁸ I took a “Worse is Better” approach to writing this book - I am just writing whatever comes to my mind, I don’t give a fuuuuuck! If you don’t like it, stop reading.

¹⁸⁹ You’re not gonna do better than Beethoven bro!

¹⁹⁰ The first version of *Facebook* was probably really shitty, too - I think basically all you could do was poke...

But at that point I was not aware of this work/management philosophy, I just thought he had built some stupid shitty thing, which was not really as good as a blog, but in some ways I guess it's cooler than a blog so, whatever, I'll roll with it....

Tom will never admit this, but I know it's true: the reason he stayed up all night and worked so hard to pump out the first version of Rap Genius was not just because he was excited about the product. What was *really* motivating him was the he felt sorry for me, he saw how fucked I was, how worried I was about losing my job, and he wanted to build an activity to keep me busy, so that I wouldn't commit suicide.

I will always love Tom, no matter what happens. I owe him - if you will pardon my nerd-ass Star Wars reference - a Wookie Life-Debt¹⁹¹. Even if he becomes a total asshole monster, I will still love him.¹⁹² Nobody has taken care of me the way that Tom has taken care of me. He is my Daddy.¹⁹³

The second song I explained¹⁹⁴ on the site was a Cam'ron song produced by Kanye West: "Down And Out". Kanye doesn't rap on it, he just produced it. I didn't really think that Kanye was the sort of rapper whose lyrics really necessitated exegesis like Cam'ron and Jay Z...but I loved Kanye. I couldn't stop listening to his music, so I wanted to get something Kanye-related on the site as soon as possible.

The third song I explained on the site was Jay Z's "Can I Live?" I suppose this choice was, subconsciously, an ardent cry for help. I was on, like, day 3 of the all-hummus diet, and the lack of protein was getting to my brain. I could relate to Jay Z's plaintive call at the end of the song: "You See Me Stressed Right?"¹⁹⁵ At this point in my life, sleeping sleeplessly on the yoga mat, I was literally heeding to the words of the song: like CBS, I kept one eye open at all times.

CHAPTER 4: ITS GETTIN HOT IN HURR

¹⁹¹ *Raaaaaaaargh!* (Chewbacca voice)

¹⁹² Actually that would make me love him even more, because if he becomes a total asshole monster, Rap Genius will probably become worth like \$10B....

¹⁹³ I say this just to be funny, but it is not really the correct analogy. Tom is like the Ishmael to my Queequeg, if you've read *Moby Dick* - I am his Sambo: I live to serve him, and he takes care of me...

¹⁹⁴ I'm using the word "explain" right now because that's the word we were using at the time. Now, the "official" verb to use is "annotate" - of course, none of these verbs are ACTUALLY correct. The correct verb would be "to *exegeize*".

¹⁹⁵ CAN I LIVE?

After “Can I Live?”, Tom took my monopoly away. He had built “user accounts” so now anyone could start a Rap Exegesis account and begin to exegize rap willy-nilly! I was afraid...

Tom and Ilan had discussed “Rap Exegesis” - Ilan loved the idea, he was on board.¹⁹⁶ Apparently lyrics is a HUGE market on the internet - did you know that?¹⁹⁷ Ilan was the first person who shared Tom’s vision of Rap Exegesis as a business. That boy has a Jewish nose for money...

I had to pick a username. I chose “Maboo” which was the Sambo name Tom would call me from time to time. Ilan’s username was JOVortex - but he has changed it a million times. I have stuck with Maboo, I am committed.

I didn’t think about Rap Exegesis as a business, I thought it was a fun art project. One night I stayed up late with Tom and I told him my goals:

#1: It would be really cool to do a Rap Exegesis Master’s Tea!¹⁹⁸ That was my stated #1 goal¹⁹⁹ of the project: to have Yale invite us back - and also invite Cam’ron - and we do a Master’s Tea with Killa Cam!

#2: A coffee table book would also be amazing. At that time, a lot of popular blogs had begun transitioning into coffee table books.²⁰⁰ The biggest success was “Stuff White People Like”, which was very much in the same vein as Rap Exegesis. It gave me hope!

A lot of “hip-hop purists” criticize Rap Genius - they say that it is white kids on safari, “translating” rap. Indeed, when the site started, that’s how I thought of it too! My favorite thing to do was “whitespeak” explanations - I thought it was really funny to translate rap lyrics using fancy SAT words.

¹⁹⁶ He was “bout it bout it”

¹⁹⁷ Our homie Kevin from Y-Combinator was a GOOGLE INSIDER - he told us that *2% of ALL Google searches are for lyrics!* That means “lyrics” is the most-searched thing on Google. (Maybe they should rename “Google” the “lyrics lookup upper thingy”)

¹⁹⁸ At Yale, the kids live in 12 “colleges” - these are Yale’s dorms. Each one has a dining hall. Also, every college has a Master living in it, who is a tenured professor. The Master has weekly “Master’s Teas” where some quasi-famous person - often an alum - will come hang out with the kids and answer their precocious questions.

¹⁹⁹ Rap Genius Master’s Tea *did*, in fact, take place in Calhoun College with Master Jonathan Holloway - who is now Dean of Yale! - on February 25, 2014. (WE DID IT!!!)

²⁰⁰ A month into Rap Exegesis, the blog DABA (Dating A Banker Anonymous) came out with a coffee table book and I was sooooo jealous!

The funny thing is...that is not what the site has in fact turned into. In fact, it has turned into a compendium of knowledge. There I was, present at the creation, trying the hardest I could to turn the site into precisely what our critics believe it to be - but I was thwarted! Rap Genius is simply *too good* of a website for an idiot like me to ruin, I was unable.

The other man who was 100% dedicated to Rap Exegesis at its inception was our friend Ariel. Ariel was born on February 29, so he is 7 years old. This reflects in his personality. Ariel was the most famous college poker player at a time when everyone had “poker fever” - he won like a million dollars playing online poker. Ariel was an ACTUAL “rap genius” - he knew a lot of trivia about the genre - and he would get intensely frustrated with my “ghetto translations” that shed no actual light on lyrics’ meaning.²⁰¹

The Early Days of Rap Exegesis was basically a competition between me and Ariel. He was the Apollo to my Dionysus - he was writing down facts, I was making jokes.²⁰² At that point, there was still no such thing as “Rap IQ” - but Tom had created a leaderboard that kept track of how many explanations each user had made. Ariel and I got extremely competitive! We were always neck-and-neck.²⁰³

Of course, the “Golden Child” of early Rap Exegesis was the same as the Golden Child of the Blogosphere: Liams.²⁰⁴ Liams knew a lot about rap, but he was also chock-full of witty repartee. It was like if me and Ariel had a Golden Baby. Liam’s annotation of Jadakiss’ “Why?” - a song founded on rhetorical questions - brought me to tears. It was one genius in conversation with another, which is Rap Genius at its finest.

Liam’s name on the site was Murkllederderder.

Dan Berger started a Rap Exegesis twitter. At the time, I didn’t even care about Twitter. I had started a personal Twitter account a couple months ago, but I didn’t understand what all the fuss was about.²⁰⁵ “How,” I wondered, “am I gonna get any pussy off of this??”²⁰⁶

When I started my personal Twitter, this was my first tweet:

²⁰¹ I was mainly just trying to be funny.

²⁰² My annotations were “haha!” his annotations were “hmmm interesting...”

²⁰³ Ariel ended up going to Harvard Law School - impressive, no?

²⁰⁴ At this point, Rap Exegesis was like the “blog all-star team”.

²⁰⁵ I didn’t understand how Twitter worked.

²⁰⁶ With Facebook it was far more clear. (A lot of rappers would LOL at my confusion...)

<https://twitter.com/mahbodmoghadam/statuses/1490470831>²⁰⁷

One time, Tom showed me the Meaning of Twitter. He said, *“you don’t even have to join to use it!”* which really got my attention. It was an unseasonably warm day in early Springtime, so he went to the Twitter search page²⁰⁸ and searched the term “skipped spring”

Suddenly - BOOM! Thousands of tweets in the past 5 minutes from a bunch of idiots:

“looks like we skipped spring!”

“whoa! did we skip spring or something?”

“wow totally skipped spring this year”

“either we skipped spring - or I just took a REALLY long nap!”

I was amazed. As I began to appreciate the importance of Twitter²⁰⁹, I wanted to weasel my way into Dan’s domain: I asked him for the Rap Exegesis Twitter password, and he gave it!²¹⁰

I never really got into using my personal Twitter until about 6 months ago. Personal Twitter is fun too! But...a corporate Twitter...it is 100x more fun.

The crazy thing is, there are no good corporate Twitters out there.²¹¹ FOOLS! You don’t know what you’re missing! Using a corporate Twitter for fun is the pretty much the most fun thing you can do on Twitter! When you flirt using a corporate twitter - the ladies love it.²¹²

But I digress....

We started adding non-rap stuff on the site quite early on. The first non-rap song I put up was Elton John’s “Rocket Man” (TL;DR: the song is about DRUGS!) - the first poem was Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are you?”

Liams put up Bob Dylan’s “Subterranean Homesick Blues” - but I suppose that is sort of a rap song, isn’t it?²¹³

²⁰⁷ An homage to Lil Wayne’s bold challenge to gender norms: “Mrs. Officer”

²⁰⁸ Without even signing in!

²⁰⁹ If there was no Twitter, there would be no Rap Genius. That’s how we built our whole community!

²¹⁰ Suuuuuuch a homie!

²¹¹ RapGenius twitter *used* to be good....

²¹² I miss it!

²¹³ It is certainly a drug rap...

But keep in mind - the work that me, Ariel and Liams were doing was shitty - according to Tom and Ilan's exacting standards. I had good jokes, but that was about it. I contrubuted nothing of value. Ariel knew a lot about rap, but he was busy studying for the LSAT so he didn't bother to put any cute links/pics. Liams' annotations were excellent - the problem was, you could only understand their brilliance if you were on a heavy dose of LSD.

So Tom and Ilan put together a CANONICAL annotation to teach us how it is done. They were our sheperd. The canonical selection was Lil Wayne's "A Milli" - which was a hot song at the time.

Of course, even their "canonical" annotation was filled with "whitespeak" and other things which in the Modern Age of Rap Genius would be considered serious "no-no's". One of my favorite annotations on the song was a total "ghetto translation" - but it was hilarious! The line was:

"Who dat one dat do dat boy?"

The annotation was:

"Who's the one who killed that boy?"²¹⁴

LOL!

But I suppose it is nothing to laugh about. We still didn't FULLY understand the capabilities of our own site! Pearls before swine²¹⁵ and all that.

There is one blogger who was truly instrumental in the formation of the early Rap Exegesis, and I haven't even mentioned her yet. I am always dissing the poor girl like this, even though she is an angel!²¹⁶ This angel is Maureen. Maureen was the first person to annotate indie rock on the site - her first song was Vampire Weekend's "Oxford Comma"²¹⁷. While the rest

²¹⁴ Of course, this annotation - like many of my early ones - is no longer intact. It turns out Lil Wayne was alluding to a Master P song, which is what the annotation tells you now. Rap Genius is a genius website; it is simply its founders who are stupid.

²¹⁵ This is an allusion to the Bible...I think Jesus said it... (I dunno Rap Genius it fool!)

²¹⁶ She gets really mad at me...

²¹⁷ Maureen has a huuuuuge crush on Ezra Koenig (SORRY MAUREEN I HAD TO SPILL THE BEANS!)

of us were sitting there annotating old rap songs that nobody cared about, Maureen was on the cutting edge!²¹⁸ She had the vision.

It's funny: when we started Rap Exegesis, I thought the whole point of the site was to annotate the classics of hip-hop. When I imagined the coffee table book - the product, someday, inshallah, of the culmination of our success! - I imagined the book to be full of old Notorious BIG and Jay Z. It turns out, however, that young people are total morons and they have no memory of old, classic things. Internet users are the *youth*, and the *youth* only care about *new shit*!

CHAPTER 5: RAP JESUS

After about 2 weeks of dicking around on the new website, I missed my girlfriend²¹⁹, so I decided to go back home to California. The yoga mat was causing some serious lumbar pain. Also Tom and Ilan were starting to give me weird googly eyes.²²⁰

I was living with my parents back in LA like a total loser, and I didn't have a car. So I redoubled my efforts on the site! I mean, at least in New York, I had other shit to do... in LA I had no distractions, no car, no friends, no money...Rap Exegesis was all I had.

Let me give you an example of the kind of ridiculous shit I was doing on the site. Here is the **current** song-level annotation for the classic Wu-Tang song "C.R.E.A.M."²²¹:

This song has almost made me cry when I was faded at least 7 or 8 times...

The original title was going to be CRAPHOSAM (Cash Rules Around Probably Half Of Stuff Around Me) with the following hook:

Cash rules lots of stuff around me
But diet's important too!
And also friends and family..

but they decided to go with the more austere version...

²¹⁸ I am a firm believer that girls are a lot smarter than boys on average. I wish I was a girl. I think I was *supposed* to be a girl, but this penis sprung up out of nowhere...

²¹⁹ Also I missed Persian food....

²²⁰ I think Tom suspected I was sleeping in his bed while he was at the hedge fund.

²²¹ Stands for "Cash Rules Everything Around Me" (which is true!)

Referenced countless times by artists ranging from [Alvin and the Chipmunks](#) to the [Notorious B.I.G.](#), this ode to money and the things that fuel the lust for green has become a cultural landmark.

The creamy sample is from ["As Long As I've Got You"](#) by The Charmels

Now...I'll let you guess which part I wrote and which part the community has added.²²² (LOL)

School was starting again soon - Katie's from LA so she was in LA for the Summer, but she was going to head back up to Berkeley... and I missed the Bay Area too, I missed the water. I got in touch with some of my old law school professors and arranged to come back to Palo Alto to work on a law review article.²²³

I was poor now, so I moved in with some Stanford students. 2 of the guys I was living with were named Dave - one was a white law student named Dave and the other was a black engineering student named Dave. I called them "Black Dave" and "White Dave", which made them really angry. However, both of the Daves loved hip-hop, and they were tremendously supportive of the Rap Genius concept - they inspired me to work hard!

Both Daves had cars, and I didn't have a car, which made me feel even more poor/upset. White Dave had a Subaru Outback, which - studies have shown - is in fact the whitest car you can have.²²⁴ I was the creepy alum who is biking around campus all day - you know the meme...

I would often work on Rap Exegesis from the Stanford Law Library. That way, I could pretend that I was working on the law review articles - but I was mainly just explaining Cam'ron. It was around these times that Tom introduced a points system to the website - a system that gave you points for your annotations. Nowadays, we call the points "Rap IQ" - a complex algorithm that takes a lot of different factors into account when awarding points.²²⁵ When it started, it would just give you 10 points per annotation - straight up.²²⁶

²²² One time an editor took out my joke part - I raised hell, I changed it back and I de-edited him for a month. One thing about me with Rap Genius: I don't like it when people fuck with my shit...

²²³ I attempted to write about the seminal tax case *Textron*...

²²⁴ "The fuel efficiency is pretty good!" "The ski rack comes standard!"

²²⁵ The most important factor today is *votes* - at this point Rap Exegesis still had no voting mechanism!

²²⁶ We lied in the instructions and said it would give you +10 for a *good* annotation and +20 for a *great* annotation!

I was very much against points.²²⁷ My favorite thing to say is “Rap IQ is just a metaphor!” - I asked Tom if I could be exempt from the points and he said no. Tom had gotten the idea for Rap IQ from his favorite website: StackOverflow.²²⁸ On StackOverflow, the word they use instead of IQ is “karma”²²⁹ - this site was where Tom had learned computer programming. StackOverflow is the foundation for Rap Genius.²³⁰

I also helped Tom draft the first “About” page for the website, the central message of which was: “Our central message is not to translate rap into ‘whitespeak’²³¹ - but rather - to critique rap as poetry.”²³² This was probably a really stupid sentence to put in there, but at the time we had no idea what we were doing! But anyways, that was how we felt.

We had “done some research” and found out there was another site that had launched 3 months before Rap Exegesis! It was called “Understand Rap”²³³ and it gave you the meaning of rap lyrics. This site was horrible, it totally sucked. Its very existence undermined our entire project.

The TRULY horrifying part would transpire some months later, when Understand Rap got its own coffee table book²³⁴:

²²⁷ I never really got into IQ - ALTHOUGH I HAVE THE 2ND HIGHEST IQ ON THE SITE!

²²⁸ When we started Rap Genius, we would tell people it is “StackOverflow for rap songs”. Nowadays - Joel Spolsky, founder of StackOverflow, tells us - people refer to StackOverflow as “Rap Genius for computer programming”. Yessssss!

²²⁹ Tom had a pretty high score!

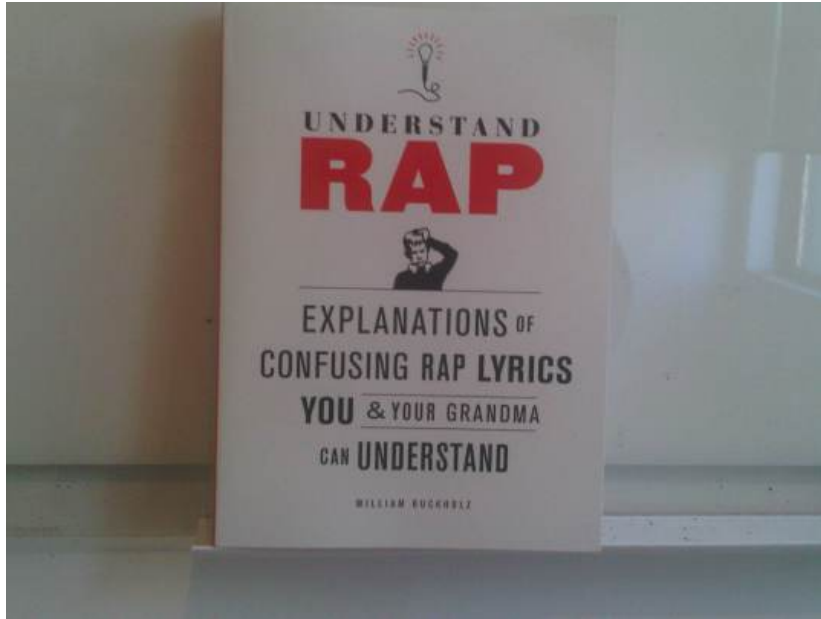
²³⁰ Remember that Tom didn’t major in Computer Science - he majored in Ethics, Politics, & Economics and Mathematics and Philosophy (5 majors haha). Tom is a tinkerer.

²³¹ We later changed this word to “nerdspeak” LOL.

²³² Funny because I break this rule all the time.

²³³ It is still up check it out!!

²³⁴ It was selling at Urban Outfitters! We were soooooo jealous....



No comprendo!

They were living my dream!!²³⁵

Discovering the existence of this site was the biggest blow - deeply demoralizing. It made us feel so marginal! Imagine if you have a dream to build something, and then you find out somebody has already built a shitty version of it, and then you think that if you build it, people will just confound the two, and you will be embarrassed, etc...

It was also around this time that the name “Rap Exegesis” began to grow irksome. I was honestly surprised that NOBODY in the entire world knows how to spell/pronounce the word “Exegesis”.²³⁶ English is my second language - there are still a plethora of English words that I have not learned.²³⁷ But the word “exegesis” - COME ON - that is a really fuckin cool word.

Anyways, Ariel - he has a nose for marketing - he said that he would quit the entire project if we didn’t change the name.²³⁸ That forced the issue to a head. Tom made a bunch of online polls, charts, graphs and other bullshit to assist us with the name change.

These were the frontrunner options:

²³⁵ The book even was on sale at Urban Outfitters - I was crushed.

²³⁶ I used to say it all the time!

²³⁷ Tom taught me the word “sartorial” and now it is one of my favorite words!

²³⁸ He was deeply upset that we had the word “rape” in the URL - Ariel is going to run for President of the United States soon, he can’t be fuckin around with shit like that...

- Rap Exegesis (don't change)
- Clipse Notes
- MeaningOfRap.com
- Raptionary
- RapWiki
- HipHopOpedia
- RapJesus

Ilan and I were obviously big supporters of "Rap Jesus"²³⁹ because Jesus is our favorite dude, and we bet he would have loved the site!²⁴⁰ If Jesus could get his own account on the site and explain his parables - come on, how dope would that be?!

Some people liked "Clipse Notes" - this is the one that made my skin crawl.²⁴¹ This name is meaningless to 99.999% of all people. The Clipse is a marginalized rap group that most of the youth has never heard of - I really like them, sure - but you don't name your website after a cult rap duo!

After several weeks of poll-taking, number-crunching, etc. - we decided to stick with Rap Exegesis.

Then - a week passed - and we once again realized that nobody can spell Rap Exegesis and that we have to change the fucking name!!

And THEN - something really cool happened. Honestly, it was the coolest thing that ever has happened in my life. When I was working at the law firm, I was obsessed with New York Magazine. I have always hated the New Yorker²⁴² - I think it is snobby as fuck. I like to think of New York Magazine as a big "FUCK YOU!" to the New Yorker - it is a magazine that kinda has the same name, is also very intelligently written...but it isn't a snobby-ass hoity toity snotrag like the New Yorker.

My favorite part of New York Magazine was the back page - the "Approval Matrix", they call it - where cultural memes are rated on a scale of "highbrow" to "lowbrow" and "despicable" to "brilliant".

So...imagine...I'm in the Stanford Law Library reading NYMag - I get to the Approval Matrix - AND RAP EXEGESIS IS THERE!!!!

²³⁹ Honestly I *still* think that should be the name of the site!

²⁴⁰ Annotating the Gospel of John was one of the funnest things ever - truly a masterpiece!

²⁴¹ Do YOU get the name? No...didn't think so.

²⁴² Pretty much everyone who writes for them is Harvard scum...

<http://nymag.com/arts/all/approvalmatrix/60281/>

“RapExegesis.com explains the references and slang in classic songs like “Juicy” (GET A GRIP MUFUCKA!). I started screaming like a giddy little schoolgirl.²⁴³ I had just been sitting there, reading the magazine. It came out of nowhere! The best part was that I was the one who had annotated “Juicy”²⁴⁴ - I kept reading the blurb over and over again, I couldn’t stop. I started thinking in my head “Yeah...this website is dedicated....to all the teachers who told me I would never amount to nothing....ITS ALL GOOD BABY BABY...”²⁴⁵

This was one of the crucial moments when I realized that this website - whatever it’s called - is going to be the focus of my life. NYMag had put us in the “somewhat highbrow, somewhat brilliant” quadrant of the Matrix! I was overjoyed.

I was soooo excited that I booked a flight to New York - I had to see the homies after this happened! It was back to the yoga mat for me. The first night I got there, my friend Amalia came over to congratulate us on the New York Mag shout-out.

Amalia is female Ilan.²⁴⁶ She is as cute as a button²⁴⁷ and - like Ariel - she has a serious knack for marketing.²⁴⁸

I was musing about how when I was a kid, my mom²⁴⁹ - who doesn’t really speak English - became obsessed with the word “genius”. She loved telling people that I’m a “genius” - she just loved the word!

“How about Rap Genius?” Amalia said.

I was like “BOOM!” - as soon as I heard it, I knew. It is like when you see your wife for the first time. “Yeah, Rap Genius, I like that...” said Ilan.²⁵⁰ “And we can call the points your “Rap IQ...”

Most people seem to agree with us that “Genius” is a really cool word. Even in foreign languages, people love this word.

²⁴³ The law students got really mad!

²⁴⁴ That song is so full of Hope....

²⁴⁵ It was all a dream! I used to read New York Magazine....

²⁴⁶ Actually...wait...Ilan is female Ilan...

²⁴⁷ She’s the one who convinced me to go to law school....

²⁴⁸ She also shares Ariel’s fondness for poker.

²⁴⁹ aka “Mamman Joon”

²⁵⁰ Also it sounds a lot like Rap Jesus!

Look at Jay Z's twitter: https://twitter.com/S_C

Of course, the funny thing is that a lot of people don't know how to spell "genius" either.

²⁵¹ Take this quote from Kanye West's legendary interview with Brett Easton Ellis²⁵²:

"If I were to write my title, like, going through the airport and you have to put down what you do, I would literally write 'Creative Genius,' except for two reasons: sometimes it takes too long to write that and sometimes I spell the word 'genius' wrong."

But anyways, that became the name. There was another round of polls and wrangling but...how can you deny "Rap Genius"?²⁵³ Have you ever heard a more beautiful name for anything?²⁵⁴ I say it to myself over and over again every single day. The rhythm!²⁵⁵

It is funny because the first rule of start-up marketing is that your company's name should be no more than 2 syllables.²⁵⁶ Google. Facebook. Twitter.²⁵⁷ I think this is total bullshit. It takes **3 SYLLABLES** to create a rhythmic lilt - and that is precisely what "Rap Genius" has done.²⁵⁸

The lead singer of Vampire Weekend²⁵⁹ - Ezra Koenig - said in an interview at the New York Public Library²⁶⁰ that he is sorry we changed the name²⁶¹:

²⁵¹ About 1% of Rap Genius' traffic comes from people googling "Rap Genius"....

²⁵² My favorite writer interviewing my favorite dude!

²⁵³ Sometimes I say it to myself over and over in the gym when I'm doing cardio - "Rap...GEnius...Rap...**GENIUS!!!**" and it motivates me, and sometimes I start crying I get so emotional...

²⁵⁴ Amalia named her son "Israel" which is also a cute name... she is very good at this.

²⁵⁵ I love how it goes "DUM daa-dum" (you feel me?)

²⁵⁶ 1 syllable is thought to be even better! (if you can get the domain name...)

²⁵⁷ Those are actually pretty good names, but the slew of start-ups with names like "crap.ly" or "crapstats" or whatever make my stomach churn.

²⁵⁸ Of course, now that the site has gone 100% corporate, we've changed the name to "Genius" - which still has a rhythm to it! Beautiful word, it's a shame what Apple has done to it...

²⁵⁹ One of my favorite bands - their lyrics are eminently annotatable too!

²⁶⁰ http://blogs.villagevoice.com/music/2010/03/vampire_weekend_11.php

²⁶¹ Ezra loves the word "Exegesis" - he even uses it in his own writings! cf. <http://news.rapgenius.com/Ezra-koenig-jay-z-rolling-stone-entry-annotated#note-1740460>

"Rap Exegesis...although they changed the name to rap genius...I don't know why...I actually think there's some religious people who were angry²⁶²...that there was a website called Rap Exegesis - but yeah, pay close attention to them"²⁶³

I am sorry we changed the name too. I love "Rap Exegesis"; it is crisp, cold, intellectual. It is like biting into a cucumber. But then again, I love "Rap Genius" too - and Rap Genius has the rhythm!!²⁶⁴

CHAPTER 6: #BASED

Now in this chapter, I don't want you to get sad, kids. Little Mahbod goes homeless in this chapter, so please, please try not to get too emotional!

It was difficult to be homeless. What was especially bothersome was that everyone thought I was rich - like I had rich parents or something - because I'm Persian. I am probably the only Poor Persian anyone has ever met...I don't know what's wrong with me.

I had to move out of Palo Alto because it was too expensive. Palo Alto Whole Foods has very tight security, it is very difficult to get away with eating for free at the salad bar.²⁶⁵ Also I was stealing fruit from our neighbors trees and I got caught and admonished a couple of times - it was embarrassing. Not having a car in Palo Alto already made me feel impoverished, even though I was living with the bi-color Daves, who were both major ballers with tricked out Subarus.²⁶⁶

As far as my stated purpose for being in Palo Alto - writing the law review articles - I hadn't really made any headway. The problem was that I really didn't give a fuck about the law. Also Rap Exegesis subsumed me.

I had, however, been trying to pitch Rap Exegesis to professors, trying to get them to sign up for accounts. Only one professor did: Lessig. Lessig was the first law professor on the website. Only problem was, he wouldn't annotate the law.²⁶⁷ Lessig annotated one song²⁶⁸ on

²⁶² In a sense, this is true - we are very religious (spiritual) and we were pissed that nobody knows how to spell our website!

²⁶³ <http://www.wnyc.org/story/15365-talk-to-me-vampire-weekend-literally/> (at 43 mins)

²⁶⁴ "Rap Jesus" is pretty good too...

²⁶⁵ The other shoppers will snitch on you, it's terrible.

²⁶⁶ Everyone cool in Palo Alto has a Subaru Outback - that car is like the starter Tesla.

²⁶⁷ Maybe this wasn't a problem, who knows?

²⁶⁸ Less(ig) is More

the site - a rap song about campaign finance reform - and then stopped using the site for years.

²⁶⁹ *But he showed love.*

However, by the time I was leaving Palo Alto, Lessig had left Stanford for Harvard. Lessig had stopped focusing on Internet Law - his new passion was (and still is) to change campaign finance practices.²⁷⁰

Living in Palo Alto without Lessig was demoralizing - it was time to move on...

I stayed with Katie while I was looking for a place in Berkeley. It was sooo embarrassing - I felt like a loser hermit weirdo. Katie lived with these adamant grad students who told her she should be ashamed she is dating me. But she was really nice, she steamed squash for me and took care of me...she felt too sorry for me to dump me.²⁷¹ She even wrote an article about the site for The Berkeley Graduate!

<http://rapgenius.com/Kukukadoo-berkeley-graduate-the-exegesis-of-rap-lyrics>

Much like Ezra Koenig²⁷², Katie was obsessed with the word "Exegesis" and was very sorry to see it go.

During this period, I became obsessed with rap blogs. I had already annotated a bunch of stuff on the site and nobody seemed to be paying attention - also I had caught on that people only care about new shit that comes out. My goal became to annotate everything that gets posted on 2dopeboyz.com - that was my favorite rap blog.²⁷³ I also started thinking it would be cool to get the artists themselves to opine on their works, so it made more sense to focus on newcomers and cult rappers - rather than on the Kanyes and Jay Zs, as we had been²⁷⁴ - because we at least stood a chance of drawing the newcomers' attention and getting them to use the site.

²⁶⁹ Years later, he annotated a song he had written for Aaron Swartz (RIP) - he also uploaded audio of himself singing it.

²⁷⁰ LARRY: if you're reading this...come back to internet law dude! We NEED you!!

²⁷¹ Katie is a Christian girl...

²⁷² And everyone else who is smart.

²⁷³ Nowadays my favorite is Pigeons & Planes.

²⁷⁴ I even thought maybe we could get lyrics from the artists, I thought rappers keep their lyrics saved in MS Word or Google Docs or something! LOL! Most rappers have their lyrics written on their iPhone message pad and that's about it...

There was ONE rap blog²⁷⁵ with which I became deeply obsessed. This was *The Mindset of a Champion*, blog of ex-XXL²⁷⁶ Magazine blogger/writer²⁷⁷ Byron Crawford. This man is an insane weirdo - he has one eye and lives with his mom in a village in Missouri. It is unclear why he is even writing about rap - also, he doesn't always write about rap²⁷⁸ - he writes all sorts of weird shit. BUT - he is the best living writer. This man's prose - every word of it - would tear into my heart. The way that he writes, there is never a single syllable too many...nor a syllable too few. He uses exactly as many words, as many sounds, as need to be used. He is a genius.

I was obsessed with trying to get bloggers to link Rap Genius, in order to increase our Google Juice²⁷⁹. To get links, we would pull crazy stunts - and thus, the Era of the Mahbod Diss Freestyle was born.²⁸⁰ The first person I ever dissed was my beloved blogger Byron Crawford. It worked! The diss got him to link us!

I had reached out to him a million times before and hadn't even gotten a response...but the diss got him to link us.²⁸¹ In the diss, I said "Byron Crawford you're lame like Hartford", which is admittedly not the best rap lyric of all time - but the whole point was that I was being playful. My rap style is largely in imitation of the Berkeley rapper Lil B, whose spirited stream-of-consciousness is, for the intelligent listener, quite pleasing.

²⁷⁵ If you can call it that...

²⁷⁶ aka XXXL

²⁷⁷ Some don't take the word "blogger" seriously.

²⁷⁸ He has an obscene blog series called "Rack Radar" where he posts bikini pics of white girls he likes - this man is truly insane.

²⁷⁹ Getting links on other websites increases your Google Juice (GJ), which leads to you winning more Google searches.

²⁸⁰ I have performed diss freestyles targeting writer Byron Crawford, rap group Das Racist, The New York Times, and Gawker blogger Sam Biddle - I have also engaged in some hardcore "Twitter beef" of which I am deeply ashamed...

²⁸¹ People always respond more eagerly to beef than to kindness...



#based

My thug, gorilla-renegade, growth hack marketing, blog-based lifestyle fit rather nicely with my Berkeley raggamuffin surroundings. I finally decided to move into the GHETTO of Berkeley - the Waterfront - which is in fact the neighborhood of my rap mentor Lil B the “Based God”.²⁸²

My Persian friend from high school Mike Nabati²⁸³ came up from L.A. and helped me move my stuff from Palo Alto to the Waterfront. *He* was going through a strange time in life, too - his car was about to get repo’d, so he drove it up from LA to kick it and help me move.²⁸⁴ Right before the move, we made a trip to Big Sur and hit up the beach. We couldn’t afford a hotel so we slept in his car, which was an Audi S4 with suede seats - my dream car.

²⁸² “Based” means “cool”....

²⁸³ This is the brother of Ben, who you may remember from the “Avi <3 Avi” post in Chapter 1 (BEN<3BEN).

²⁸⁴ A repo delay tactic, essentially...

I had spent the entire day in the ocean, I was feeling salty. I was numb. We went to Whole Foods for dinner and I felt giddy from the beach, I wanted to treat myself. I ordered 9 pieces salmon sashimi from the Whole Foods sushi bar. The salt was glistening on my face - as I ordered, the sushi chef licked his lips like he was gonna chop me up and feed 9 pieces Persian sashimi to the salmon.²⁸⁵ Post-beach, I was wearing a designer shirt from my law firm times.

At night, I was sleeping in a luxury Audi.²⁸⁶

I felt like I was the definition of hood-rich - I was the most luxurious homeless man in the history of homelessness.

That night, Mike showed me how an iPhone works. I had a T-Mobile flip phone at this time, and although I would see Tom and Ilan fiddle with their iPhones in NYC, *nobody had ever before actually shown me what an iPhone does!* I couldn't believe how seamlessly it recreated the experience of being on the Internet from such a small device. It was epic, life-changing - I really wanted one, but I knew I couldn't afford to convert to iPhone at this time...

In my younger days, Mike had been the guy who would convince me to drive to Vegas at midnight. He was a total party boy, a bad influence. So it makes perfect sense that he's the one who introduced me to smartphones.

Mike stayed with me in Berkeley for a week²⁸⁷ and we did some really cool stuff on Rap Genius. He is a really smart dude²⁸⁸, plus he really motivated me to do some innovative stuff with the site. Mike is obsessed with indie rock²⁸⁹ and, while he was there, we heard "Pumped Up Kicks" for the first time. As soon as we heard it - we were hooked. We looked at each other, like: *This is the song!* We had parsed the meaning of the lyrics on the internet before anybody else had even heard the song.

The true birth of "Rock Genius" was the "Pumped Up Kicks" exclusive - that was the first time that we had a huge meme non-rap song up on the internet before anybody else.

The place I had moved into was a total classic. I was living with this Moroccan dude, Badr, he imported hippie knick-knacks into Berkeley for a living. Badr barely spoke English...but he was probably the most handsome dude you have ever seen. His stomach was perfectly defined, he inspired me to work out harder. He would light incense and shit - he was the perfect complement to my hip-hop thug lifestyle. I loved him.

²⁸⁵ I felt like I could afford to get sashimi this one time because I was abusing samples heavily.

²⁸⁶ It was #based.

²⁸⁷ Just trying to delay the repo and keep the luxury car a bit longer...

²⁸⁸ We took lots of Adderall.

²⁸⁹ The first song he annotated on the site was "7 Nation Army"...

The surroundings were insane - I had never lived in the ghetto before. The strangest part of living in the ghetto is: you can hear everything your neighbors are doing, 24 hours a day.²⁹⁰ Between Badr and the neighbors, there was literally not a single moment in the day in which I did not smell weed. I felt like I was in Heaven.

All in all, my environment was perfect for the ghetto life I now began to lead. I started playing basketball at People's Park²⁹¹ with the homeless people. I lived off of Whole Foods samples. All day I would work on Rap/Rock/Poetry Genius²⁹² - annotating all sorts of stuff: I got really into classic rock, I made some inroads on Shakespeare - my IQ was racing! It was one of the happiest times of my life.

This was the time when Rap Genius Twitter began to gain momentum as well. I used Rap Genius Twitter as if it was my own twitter - I would DM pretty girls, keep in touch with family²⁹³... the coolest part was the mystique with which people would treat tweets coming from a corporate Twitter. Like, even if they knew it was me, they still couldn't help but to feel like "The Rap Genius" was communicating with them.

Rap Genius Twitter is critical to how we built a brand, an audience, and a community of active annotators on the site. FOR ME, the most important part of Twitter is the jokes. I tried to make about 20% of Rap Genius Tweets jokes - sometimes I would steal these jokes from comedians' Twitters.²⁹⁴ However, I didn't think of it as stealing! I was a Tweet curator, using the raw materials of the internet to build a voice for Rap Genius. The voice of the Rap Genius Twitter became the voice that annotators would try to emulate on the site - Twitter was my tool for communicating with my flock, and it will always be my favorite website.

The only part of bourgeois Palo Alto living I missed was the gym.²⁹⁵ The Stanford gym²⁹⁶ is soooooo baller, you have no idea. It is the most baller university gym in the muthafuckin planet. The air filtration system of the gym is world-class - one of the finest in existence - the air you

²⁹⁰ It's kind of fun!

²⁹¹ This is the park in Berkeley where you go to buy drugs.

²⁹² Sometimes I would work from home, sometimes I would go to the UC Berkeley campus computers and use Katie's login.

²⁹³ Later on, Rap Genius Twitter would become crucial in our efforts to hang out with rappers and get them to use the site.

²⁹⁴ I call this "Twitterjacking" - pretty much everything I do is bad!

²⁹⁵ Even gym I didn't miss that much - ghetto gyms have a certain vigor/appeal that bourgeois gyms - for all of their towels - can never match.

²⁹⁶ Aka "Arrillaga"

breathe in the Stanford gym is, in fact, cleaner than the air at Yosemite. I did some of my hardest workouts in that gym.²⁹⁷ At Berkeley I was forced to join 24 Hour Fitness, which, at first, I found deeply degrading.

Over time, however, I began to love the Berkeley 24 Hour Fitness just as much. It was right next to this bourgeois “farm to table” restaurant²⁹⁸, so it was fun to watch the rich fat slobs stuffing their face with porkbelly right after I had finished a good workout. It was another sign that wealth does not buy happiness...it just makes you fatter and more disgusting.

To get some extra cash, I taught a summer class at Berkeley that turned out to be pretty interesting for Rap Genius. These were high school kids, but they would come take classes over the summer at UC Berkeley.²⁹⁹ The course I taught was “Introduction to American Law”. Obviously, I used my class as a hustle for Rap Genius - I enslaved the kids and made them put up the Constitution and stuff like that on the site, and annotate it. I made it clear that the students’ “Law IQ” would be critical to their final grade.

For the term paper, I told them to write a legal memo on the legality of Rap Genius. At this point, I was really just doing this for jokes...I never thought anybody would ACTUALLY have legal beef with Rap Genius. One of my students, Alope...the kid was a genius. The paper he wrote was basically identical to the memos we would pay high-powered corporate attorneys to write a couple years later. “Fair Use”, “Transformative”, “DMCA” - he even cited the same cases they would cite!³⁰⁰

They paid me like \$5K to teach the class - not that much, but I would have done it for free. Teaching is really the funnest job, and enslaving your students to serve your website is deeply fulfilling.

No matter how poor I got, I refused to stop going to Whole Foods. I wasn’t willing to sink to Trader Joe’s level existence. This was only possible because I was living in the Bay Area.³⁰¹ Sure, rents are high in the Bay Area - but it is the urban area in the U.S. where it is easiest to

²⁹⁷ As you will see later in the book, the Stanford gym becomes a major spiritual homeland for Rap Genius.

²⁹⁸ Katie was a waitress at this restaurant for a month, it is called “Revival Bar + Kitchen”.

²⁹⁹ It is basically a racket to get money - the courses aren’t even taught by Berkeley professors they are taught by idiots like me!

³⁰⁰ The kid is headed for law school for sure (I can smell it...)

³⁰¹ The Bay Area - especially Berkeley - is a place where it is relatively easy to be poor. It is easy to sneak on the BART for example...

steal food! Nobody is going to throw you in jail for stealing food in Berkeley - the security guards are all totally chill, they are homies.

My essential Berkeley Whole Foods hustle was based on the fact that they didn't have plastic bags at the bulk bins, they had paper bags, to be environmentally friendly. So I could fill up the bag with macademia nuts, sprouted almonds³⁰², etc. and tell the cashier it was popcorn.

³⁰³ The Berkeley cashiers would never bust me - they were chill!³⁰⁴ This technique saved me thousands of dollars - it made Rap Genius possible. Thanks, Berkeley Whole Foods.

The principal thing I ate during this period was fruits³⁰⁵ and nuts.

Rap Genius was getting a steady trickle of press. I had started occasionally blogging for New York Magazine, Esquire, The Atlantic - they would let me write articles where I could link Rap Genius, and sometimes I would get paid too.³⁰⁶

But the most important attention we got at this point was that Justin Kan blogged about us. Justin Kan was my classmate at Yale, he started this huge website called Justin.tv.³⁰⁷ He was the first Silicon Valley tech dude to show us love! I emailed him and we set up a meeting in SF.

I snuck on the BART like a pro and went to SOMA to meet him. SOMA is the home of the greatest Whole Foods in the world, so I had to stop there before our meeting for a pilgrimage.³⁰⁸ I met him at the Justin.tv headquarters - it was the first time I had seen a start-up's headquarters. They had a foosball table, a hammock...all the memes.³⁰⁹ I felt like a babe in toyland.

Justin had a critical message for me during our meeting: APPLY TO Y COMBINATOR. Tom would always talk about Y Combinator³¹⁰ and it sounded kind of stupid to me. Especially for Rap Genius, it just didn't seem like it would be a good fit. I never got the point of "fundraising"³¹¹ - why not just start making money?³¹²

³⁰² These are like \$20 a pound, popcorn is \$2 a pound.

³⁰³ This is a technique that Paul Graham would refer to as a "non-technical hack".

³⁰⁴ Berkeley is chill as FUCK. Everyone there is chill.

³⁰⁵ (stolen from neighbors' trees)

³⁰⁶ I never told Tom and Ilan I was getting paid.

³⁰⁷ I'm still not 100% sure what justin.tv did...but it was huge!

³⁰⁸ I had a young coconut.

³⁰⁹ It was a loft....

³¹⁰ Y Combinator is a "nerd camp" that gives you money and finds investors for your start-up. It is located in Mountain View, very close to Stanford. It was started by Paul Graham who is "King of the Nerds" (seriously, nerds worship him).

³¹¹ I still don't...

³¹² I was like the Eduardo of this rap shit...

Anyways, Justin and Tom later had an email orgy and it was set: we were applying for Y-Combinator³¹³.. we were gonna try to go legit! Yeah!

CHAPTER 7: BIG PIMPIN UP IN NYC³¹⁴

To save money, I sublet my ghetto apartment for 2 months and flew to New York, to chill with Tom and Ilan. I was completely out of money at this point - Tom had flown me out, and Tom was giving me \$1K a month to pay for food. Hummus was necessary, protein was secondary - I was weighing bout 145...very scary.³¹⁵

Before leaving for NYC I visited my family in LA, and the most notable thing about this visit was I took my mom³¹⁶ to see The Social Network. Now...I NEVER go to movies.³¹⁷ It is, like, against my religion.³¹⁸ Also, I never kick it with my mom. I love her but...she irritates me. She is like the female version of me, I swear. But I don't know what made me do it, I took Mamman to see The Social Network.

Also what's funny is - Mamman doesn't really speak English. So I had to translate the whole movie for her into Persian.³¹⁹ Translating the movie I was watching, I was also living the movie I was watching. I felt like I was watching The Rap Genius Movie, this movie was actually about us. My voice was quivering throughout the entire thing, and Mamman kept crying too; she knew she was watching The Rap Genius Movie, too.

As soon as I got to New York and saw Tom - "TOM: did you see it?"

"I did dogg. Craziest movie ever."

Seeing The Social Network was the defining moment that made me take Rap Genius seriously - it elevated Rap Genius from a "project" to my life's work.³²⁰ Obviously, the character I related to the most - both ethnically as well as characteristically - was Eduardo. I loved Eduardo,

³¹³ I think Tom and Ilan had already applied to Y Combinator for BombSheets or one of their other weird ideas...

³¹⁴ A line from Jay Z's "Big Pimpin" performed with UGK members Bun B and Pimp C (REST IN PEACE!)

³¹⁵ I am usually around 165 at "healthy" weight (ps this was a rap).

³¹⁶ aka "Mamman Goon"

³¹⁷ EVER.

³¹⁸ SPOILER ALERT: we discover later in the book that I have some brain issues that may relate to this.

³¹⁹ This really pissed off whoever was sitting next to us, probably, but whatever I don't care.

³²⁰ It had the same effect for Tom (Ilan thought it was corny LOL).

I never knew about him before seeing the movie.³²¹ As far as I was concerned, he was the one who came up the most - he got rich off of Facebook and he didn't even have to do that much work. My goal in life now was to be the Eduardo of Rap Genius.³²²

In the first week of my NYC stay, we made the move. Rap Genius moved from the East Village to Brooklyn, to try to have a more “thug” image. Tom’s Williamsburg apartment is where all of Rap Genius’ offices are located today³²³ - Rap Genius has the whole penthouse.³²⁴ Tom’s mom came up from Miami to help him move; she had to come because moving Tom’s ceramics is a major pain in the ass. Tom is a master “Raku” ceramicist - a Japanese pottery style with a kilning technique that makes the pottery even more fragile.³²⁵

USE SCREENSHOT OF THIS AS PHOTO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olChlrBEa4U>
Brooklyn we go hard!

Tom’s mom took us to Union Square Cafe, which was the fanciest meal I’d had in a long time.³²⁶ At dinner, she asked us about the memes of rap, and we told her that Kanye West’s album was coming soon.³²⁷

Tom chose to move to Brooklyn because he was only working one day a week at his hedge fund now. He was soooo important to the hedge fund, that they were willing to pay him a shitload of money just to come into the office one day a week. The rest of the time he was just working on Rap Genius...

Ilan moved in with his girlfriend, also in Williamsburg. His girlfriend was not in any way involved in Rap Genius. By this point, I had a very simple rule for girlfriends: if they were not contributing to the Rap Genius Project, then they had to go. I tried to get him to move on from the free rider - and my peer pressure worked, somewhat: he would sleep in To’s living room with

³²¹ I’m not really a “tech guy” so I don’t know this kind of stuff...

³²² When I change from U.S. to Iran citizenship to save on taxes...that is when I will know that I have made it...

³²³ Moving into ACTUAL offices soon tho...

³²⁴ How pimp is that? Come on...

³²⁵ The opposite of what kilning usually does.

³²⁶ I ordered the trout.

³²⁷ She was excited.

me a lot of the time- him on the couch, me on the yoga mat - and we would stay up late into the night gossiping about love.

Ilan had quit Google for Rap Genius. Alongside Rap Genius, he had built a thriving hypnosis practice. He catered to the stars.³²⁸



IlanZechory.com homepage (cute!)

On Rap Genius, he was doing a lot of the same things that I was doing. Tom had built different levels of power on the site now - Rap Genius was beginning to have a hierarchy like Samurai Japan.³²⁹ So the main thing we were trying to do was find “editors” - promoting users to be masters of the site.

By now, Rap Genius had a community of about 100 members who were never part of the Blogosphere. I still keep in touch with a lot of these dudes - they are the homies. But there was one who stood out, one who would eventually pull ahead of me in Rap IQ! This man was the first non-blogger ever to enter the Rap Genius community: his name is Shawn.

Shawn is Rap Genius personified. He is the nerdiest guy you have ever seen in your life³³⁰ - if I saw him at a bar and I wanted to guess his favorite song, it would be a toss-up between “Hey There Delilah” and “Mr. Jones”³³¹. But - for SOME INEXPLICABLE REASON - Shawn knows everything about rap. “Why did he learn all this?” you wonder to yourself.

Shawn doesn’t even talk all slangy and shit - he talks like a boring white guy. He doesn’t own any Rocawear - he dresses like Steve Jobs. If I am the heart of Rap Genius, Shawn is the

³²⁸ Stars so famous that I can’t even tell you who they are (but trust me they are famous...)

³²⁹ It is a feudal website.

³³⁰ He discovered Rap Genius (then “Rap Exegesis”) from the New York Magazine “Approval Matrix”!!!

³³¹ In fact his favorite rocker is Bruce Springsteen LOL.

kidneys. He has always been the “#1 Citizen” of Rap Genius - he has a higher IQ than I do, for Christ’s sake! Without him, the site would simply not exist.

Ilan was also doing grown-up business stuff though - things that I simply didn’t understand.³³² Ilan’s parents are both lawyers, like Tom’s - if your parents are lawyers, you have a magical brain that a non-lawyer-parent person simply cannot fathom. My parents are Persians. That’s, like, the opposite of lawyers.

I remember them bickering and losing sleep over their first e-mail to Fred Wilson, who is NYC’s meme venture capital man.³³³ There was a long, drawn out fight over what the title of the email should be, and they settled on “Hola from Rap Genius!”

Here is the email and Fred Wilson’s response:

From: Fred Wilson <fredwilson@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 7, 2011 at 9:49 AM
Subject: Re: Hola from RapGenius.com - Wiki explanations of rap lyrics
To: Tom Lehman <tom@rapgenius.com>

I think lyrics is a very crowded space and almost entirely reliant on Google for traffic

On Mar 4, 2011 12:26 AM, "Tom Lehman" <tom@rapgenius.com> wrote:

- > Hi Fred!
- >
- > I want to show you my startup, Rap Genius <<http://rapgenius.com/>>.
- >
- > It's a collaboratively-edited
- > guide to the meaning of rap lyrics.
- >
- > Rap Genius <<http://rapgenius.com/>> lets you read rap lyrics and click confusing
- > lines for pop-up explanations. You can also explain new lines by

³³² I *still* don’t understand.

³³³ He Is A V.C.

- > highlighting them and clicking "Explain". If you make good contributions,
- > you'll earn "Rap IQ" (reputation / karma - modeled on StackOverflow).
- >
- > We've been working on the site for about a year and we're getting real
- > traction³³⁴:
- >
- > - 800k uniques / month (25% monthly growth over the last 4 months)
- > - 1763 people earned "Rap IQ" by contributing explanations in the past 30
- > days.
- >
- > We're also working on expanding to rock <<http://rapgenius.com/42109>>,
- > poetry <<http://rapgenius.com/42812>>, and the bible<<http://rapgenius.com/47184>>
- > .
- >
- > We hope to use crowd-sourced lyrical analysis to dominate the lyrics space
- > and we'd love to get your opinion on our approach. (We live in NYC, so we're
- > available to meet in person if you're down)
- >
- > Tom
- >
- > Ps. Here's the Rap Genius "Family Tree"!
- >

³³⁴ This is a meme word that Tom taught me - tech people love to use this word. It means people are using your thing. But they just love saying it, tech guys are always looking for excuses to say "traction"...



I was just like, “who gives a fuck? We gotta annotate Gucci Mane!” I didn’t understand how capitalism worked, and how crushed I ought to have been at Fred Wilson’s disinterest.

Ariel and Maureen were no longer in NYC, they had bounced; Ariel had started (Harvard) law school and Maureen had started (Harvard) medical school.³³⁵

It was a lusty time in NYC - this was October, the only month of the year when NYC is actually pretty.³³⁶ The first truly emotional thing that happened on the trip was when Anthony Volodkin tweeted about Rap Genius:

<https://twitter.com/fascinated/status/14717231292>

³³⁵ I still don’t know how I feel about people going to Harvard for graduate school - if you go there for college, obviously you are pure evil. If you go there for graduate school...does that make you **kinda** evil? No, right?

³³⁶ It is also the time of year when I am the most emotional, since it is close to my birthday (November; I’m a Scorpio in case you couldn’t already tell.)

If you don't know who Volodkin is, then obviously you have horrible taste in music. He is the founder of The Hype Machine, which - as far as I'm concerned - is in fact the coolest music website on the internet.³³⁷ Getting a tweet from him was off the HOOK. We got to meet with him too, in a bar on the Lower East Side. He was wearing a thumb ring, I'll never forget.

The Hype Machine is run by Anthony and one other dude - it is an amazing site, everyone *cool* knows about it, and it never became an official part of capitalism: they never raised money, never became part of the Illuminati. In my dream life, Rap Genius would have turned into something like Hype Machine...

Our 2nd big-time celebrity fanmail also came through around this time - we got an email from Elizabeth Spiers showing us love! This was especially important to me because - aside from being one of the founders of Gawker³³⁸ - Spiers started AboveTheLaw.com, the legal tabloid blog I would read every day while I was working at the law firm³³⁹. I was OBSESSED with Above The Law - I would constantly read a story, read *all* of the comments, and then wonder to myself, "why did I just read all of the comments?!"

We got to have coffee with Elizabeth too, it was like an internet fairytale fantasy! Liz gave us a goal for which to strive: 1 million unique visitors. She told us that when you hit 1 million unique visitors, it happens, it is official: you are a meme.³⁴⁰

I fell in love with her, she was soooo smart. Elizabeth even hooked me up with the AboveTheLaw writers³⁴¹, who ended up writing a piece about me! It was the 2nd big-time Rap Genius press, I felt like I was dreaming.

This is the story: <http://abovethelaw.com/2010/07/a-genius-use-of-deferral-time/>

For the story, they asked me to give them a photo to use, so of course I sent them the photo Tom had taken of me when we went hiking at Harriman State Park in Sloatsburg - I had a giant carrot in my mouth and was throwing up a gang sign³⁴²:

³³⁷ Except for Twitter it is the site I use the most -it curates music posted on blogs and turns it into a radio station! How cool is that?!

³³⁸ My "guilty pleasure"....

³³⁹ EVERYONE who works at a law firm reads Above The Law (EVERYONE!) - if they tell you they don't, they are lying.

³⁴⁰ Rap Genius has like 40 million unique visitors now BAHAAHAHAHA (nobody laughs like that).

³⁴¹ Keep in mind: like, a year before, these writers were my HEROES! And now I got to email with them! I was living the dream.

³⁴² This photo has since become iconic.



Thug Liiiiife!

The Above The Law story was about how I was using my law firm deferral to start a rap website - I didn't tell them about the whole drama with Warren Buffett.³⁴³

REIHAN MEETING - KANYE "LAST CALL" - "these were superstars, in my eyes, and they still are..." Reihan's policy freestyles inspired me to write this rap in the style of Cam'ron:

[April is the cruelest month](#)

Dispet got dem Rugers ma
In our belts we do this hun
You messin wit the truest, ma

Oh, la, la, the chick ain't got no [soutien gorge](#)
[Like Grampa on the rocking porch](#)
[I'm droolin wit my rocks en-gorged...](#)

Fiends want my rock I'm sure
[And I deliver like the Stork](#)
[Stork, Starks, stocks, FARC](#)
[Y'all need an underwriter](#)
But I got [JR Writer](#)
[My nigga under write ya](#)
[Oversell ya](#)
He the fella

CHAPTER 8: NAKED ADDERALL

³⁴³ I was saving that part for my book, which you are reading now (I hope).

PUT PERDOMO IN THERE

MAILING KID \$20 FOR WIKIPEDIA PAGE

JAY Z DECODED

BYRON CRAWFORD UPDATE

Yoo Byron!

Rap Genius wants to squash the beef with you dogg.. we are anti-Israel too.. we have a common enemy..

Thank you for linking the Chris Hamilton freestyle G

Emailing you because we got a pretty big project this week: we heard Jay-Z's book ("Decoded") explaining his own lyrics is coming out this Tuesday. We checked our site for the tracks he explained - and [we already had ALL of them explained!](#) (Along with ~100 other Jay-Z songs..)

Rap Genius loves Jay-Z, so the explanations are madd good (based on the book previews, I think they're better than his own!)

Man vs. Machine.. peep it:

<http://rapgenius.com/posts/Jay-z-vs-rapgenius-com-who-s-better-at-decoding-jay-z-s-lyrics>

Holla atchya boy, let me know when you guys are doing some big stories and I'm happy to link those as well!

I suggest you do a post about this.. I don't want this to have to go "off wax".. (or "off silicon" or whatever)

KANYE WEST MBDTF

NAKED ADDERALL, END CHAPTER WITH RAP MAP (SHOUT OUT DAN BERGER!) + RAP GENIUS ON GERMAN TV - SCOLD TOM FOR SITTING OUT



From the beginning of the Rap Genius Project, us 3 founders have wondered if Rap Genius would in fact increase, or diminish, our sex.³⁴⁴ On the one hand, Rap Genius is musical and you can say “hey baby did you know I met Kanye West? Uh-huh, we go way back. Oh, by the way, did I mention that I was chillin with Gucci Mane? Yeah we’re pen pals now that he’s in prison...”

On the other hand, the internet is super nerdy and hip-hop is more of a dude thing.

³⁴⁴ In fact we are *still* wondering...

One of the first sex nights in the history of Rap Genius was when I lured our friend Carina over to the apartment and convinced her to make an account. She did squats and yoga with me Tom and Ilan, she was wearing tights. We were absolutely titillated.

She signed up for Rap Genius with the username “C-sick” (get it?) and did some absolutely beautiful annotations on Jay-Z’s “Song Cry”. My favorite was

CHAPTER 9: Y COMBROS

ok... as long as you put into the book the time when i TRULY clowned you on the "these glasses ARE polarized, tom!!!" tip.... we can talk

FIRST INSTAGRAM PHOTO WITH TAG #YCOMBINATOR: <http://instagram.com/p/FRxnU/>

For Y Comb “non-technical hack” say that you couldn’t use the Whole Foods paper bag bc too close to stealing.

During the first month of Y-Combinator, I was still getting used to the fact that I could get food from Whole Foods now without stealing it. I felt like a prince! I started eating this expensive hummus with probiotics in it - it tasted like yogurt.³⁴⁵ We set up Rap Genius payroll and started paying ourselves \$3K/month - I was rich!! I even got a nice, fancy new bicycle.

We also leased the first ever “Rap Genius Audi”³⁴⁶ - it was an A4, which is basically the “Audi Civic”³⁴⁷ - but at the time it felt impossibly luxurious. We would drive to Y-Combinator weekly meetings in the Rap Genius Audi blasting techno music - it was a very unce unce vibe.

A month into Y-Combinator - Katie took me to her best friend Leah’s wedding in Saint Barthe. It was getting towards the End of Days for me and Katie, I could feel it³⁴⁸ - it was a sad time. Anyways, at the wedding I made a total fool of myself, I got topless at the reception³⁴⁹ - it is simply my nature.

³⁴⁵ These puppies were like \$5 a pop!

³⁴⁶ Rap Genius has like 4 Audis now.

³⁴⁷ It is the “ghetto Audi”...

³⁴⁸ She liked me more as a blog than as a person.

³⁴⁹ *Comme d’habitude...*



We be clubbin!

Leah's maid of honor was her adorable little sister, who is known as "The D"³⁵⁰. Everybody fawns over The D, she is the littlest, and the family's darling.³⁵¹ So, after the wedding, Leah asked The D: "So, D, what did you think of Katie's boyfriend Mahbod?"

She thought about it long and hard: "he seemed.... very wealthy..."

WEALTHY! I was at rock bottom - I had just gotten my first \$3K paycheck - but she thought I was wealthy! It was the greatest honor...

For some reason, everybody always thinks I'm wealthy. When I was a kid everyone assumed my parents are wealthy because we're Persian.³⁵² Even as I sit and write this book - I have reverted to my old ways, I am stealing from Whole Foods again - but everyone thinks I'm wealthy from Rap Genius. Hopefully, I can keep this charade up a bit longer...³⁵³

BRING IN CLEMENT + TOBIAS DURING Y COMBINATOR!!!

SKORG! Even "vandals" of the site in fact love the site - facebook doesn't have this level of addiction.

³⁵⁰ Short for "Dana".

³⁵¹ The D just started college! I am hopefully gonna marry her when she graduates, inshallah.

³⁵² They are totally broke!

³⁵³ At least until I find a wife.

CHAPTER 10: “ASHTON INVESTED”

LOCATION OF RAP GENIUS I feel like if I had fought harder to have us be located in San Francisco. There are drawbacks to an internet site being located in the Bay Area. As I write this, the region seems horrifyingly detached from the rest of the world.³⁵⁴ It is, I think, in fact bad for a business to be located in the Bay Area. But whatever dogg! The Bay Area is the bomb. Most fun place to live in the entire country, also when you're there you just feel healthier!³⁵⁵ Also I love the way girls dress in San Francisco.³⁵⁶

DA - only person from Harvard I ever liked

CHAPTER 11: WADDUP GUCCI

START OFF WITH MIKE G MEME - THE CONCEPT OF VERIFIED ACCOUNTS

³⁵⁴ They are eating Soylent there...

³⁵⁵ It's because the water comes from the good ole Hetch-Hetchy in Yosemite.

³⁵⁶ They are way better dressed than, say, LA or NYC girls, even though there is a commonplace misconception that the inverse of this is true.



My mom aka “Mamman Goon” sitting with Mike G at the Malibu crib

- verified vs community - up to comm to do good annotations, verified can fuck around (FOR EXAMPLE, if you been reading this book (footnote: good job!))

AYAL introduces me to all of my heroes.

3 TYPES OF RAPPERS: EAST WEST SOUTH

CHAPTER 12: EMCEE TIC TOC

CAPITALISM IS SHIT: MY BEST WORK ON RG WAS BEFORE I WAS GETTING PAID. HOW COME FACEBOOK DOESNT HIRE PEOPLE TO FACEBOOK? WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE DONE THIS, WE DONT NEED COMMUNITY MANAGERS.

LONG DISCRETION ABOUT UNLIMITED WHOLE FOOD / SEAMLESS

Ben Horowitz thinks he's black³⁵⁷, half the black people I know he introduced me to, "Jackie Robinson" of BBQ, If you can convert to Judaism, why not convert to black?

MC HAMMER: The Goebbels to Conway's Himmler - met him at the dinner w/Drew Houston.

DAVID HOROWITZ AYATOLLAH

CHAPTER 13: ZUCK MY DICK

THIS IS WHERE LIZ COMES IN - BIG LIZ DISCRETION

CHAPTER 14: MTV

TOM GETTING THE PIANO FOR 704 - I PLAY FOR EVERYONE - PIANO THEME: I THEN LOSE IT BECAUSE OF SHAKY HAND, CRYING AT THE PARTY BECAUSE I CANT PLAY. FIRST THING I REMEMBER WHEN I WAKE UP FROM SURGERY IS I CAN PLAY PIANO AGAIN! 13TH INVENTION. STEROIDS. IMPORTANCE OF PIANO IN MY RECOVERY. SCHUBERT 3RD IMPROMPTU FINISHED RIGHT WHEN IM GETTING FIRED SO I DONT GIVE A FUCK IM GETTING FIRED

COMBAT JAGH - THIS IS WHERE THE SULLY DRAMA GOES DOWN

[your tumblr is your blog](#)

an oral history

[tatted on the internet so I know it's real](#)

[your pinterest](#) style is childlike sexuality.

Your daughter [someday will look here to make a scrapbook.](#)

it will cost tens of thousands to purchase

³⁵⁷ Ben is the "RuPaul of Capitalism".

the vision you have wrought

[your instagram](#) is the pipes and
filters of your delicate web presence

your [twitter](#) is a black girl's twitter
[with chocolate skin and dark green eyes](#)

[your eyes don't seem to fit](#)
[framed in the web of your brow](#)

[your neck is a long cathode ray tube](#)
- or ethernet connection.

[you are a vintage girl](#)
[obsessed with antiques](#)

[your vine is still high-concept](#), early stage
a portent of the internet-to-come

[your tinder is deactivated](#)
[in accordance with the rules of Islam.](#)

your facebook is gnarled and
chewed up. yesterday's toy, nothing
remains here but a timeline of
alluring photos to show outsiders

[your snapchat is the highest art.](#)

I'm fond of seeing you rest on your pillow
before the snap diffuses.
an intimacy outdone only by
exploring your back
with my fingers in real life

on the very same snapchat pillow,
[or imagining your singing voice](#)
[on the old-fashioned telephone](#)

CHAPTER 15: SLEEP AND TINDER

RON COMING INTO MY LIFE, MOVE TO BEL AIR

ADDICTION TO IPHONE RIGHT BEFORE SURGERY (TINDER, “CAN YOU BRING MY CHARGER??”) ME NITASHA COMPARISON

The weekend before I was scheduled to go see the doctor, we threw a Rap Genius rager party. I don’t even remember what it was for - I was totally out of it - it was the most decadent time. All I would do was Tinder and sleep.

I decided to take a pre-party nap and it turned into a long one - I got into bed at around 7 pm³⁵⁸ and at 11 Ilan came into my room and pulled the cover off of me.

“What are you doing?!” he said “We’re having this party for you! Get up! You gotta get upstairs!”³⁵⁹

“I can’t...5 more minutes...”

Ilan was really angry at me! He left my room and mumbled “get your shit together!” or something like that. I got up and my hand was shaking *extra*-hard. I tried to brush my teeth for the party but I really just couldn’t pull it off.

As soon as I got upstairs someone offered me pills, so I took them. That made me feel more powerful, and put me in a better mood. I met this girl at the party who looked pretty much exactly like Anne Frank.³⁶⁰ Her name is Wendy, which is obviously a really funny name. In fact, I still find it hard to believe that there are non-cartoon characters named Wendy.

Wendy told me that the name actually comes from a cartoon - the first Wendy in world history was the girl in Peter Pan. She was friends with one of the Rap Genius employees. She had a really funny story: she had just graduated from college and was working for a company that was basically “Zagat for Judges” - she would call attorneys and get reviews of judges. It

³⁵⁸ After devouring some sugar-laden “bran bars” for dinner.

³⁵⁹ I was asleep on the 4th floor in the apartment I shared with Tom, the party was in the Rap Genius offices on the penthouse floor.

³⁶⁰ If Anne Frank were alive today, she would definitely be a Belieber...

was a drudgy, judgy job, and she totally hated it.³⁶¹ Her passion is poetry - she wanted to be a poet.³⁶²

Anyways I fell in love, I friended her on fb and told her I'd hit her up next week. The whole time we were talking I had my left hand jammed deep into my pocket³⁶³ and I really hoped she couldn't notice the shaking.

On Tuesday I went to the doctor. Before I went, I got really high - the Weeknd's new album, *Kiss Land* was streaming on BBC radio and I listened to the whole thing. From the first note until the last, I was sobbing and blubbing. I thought it was the most beautiful music I had ever heard³⁶⁴ - it reflected the pain I had been feeling since Sully dumped me in June.

The doctor saw my hand shaking and he freaked the fuck out. This was not carpal tunnel! He attempted to take an X-ray just to be sure but it wasn't even possible - I couldn't hold my hand steady long enough for the X-ray to work. He sent me to the neurologist the same day - there was clearly something very wrong with me.

The neurologist figured I probably have Parkinson's or something - there is also this Parkinson's-related disease called "Wilson's disease" which comes from having too much copper, so he gave me a 2-gallon jug and told me that I had to save ALL of my urine in there for 24 hours so we could test my copper levels. He also sent me to get a brain MRI - just to be safe...

CHAPTER 16: YEEZUS

PERSIAN JAY Z VS PERSIAN KANYE WEST
THEY TOOK AWAY MY TWITTER - THE QUOTE

<https://twitter.com/RapGenius/status/410581444633706496>

CHAPTER 17: FLOETRY

³⁶¹ From *my* perspective, as a former attorney, I couldn't think of a cuter job for a girl to have.

³⁶² This is not an actual job unfortch.

³⁶³ As deep as I could get it...

³⁶⁴ *Kiss Land* got a bad review on Pitchfork - which is, for me, the definitive evidence that Pitchfork is total bullshit.

She mostly annotated Frank O'Hara, which was cool. He was a poet I had never even heard of before. Basically, I see 3 different purposes that Poetry Genius could serve.³⁶⁵ First, and most obvious, is to be a Sparknotes-type thing that annotates Shakespeare and Gilgamesh. These annotations would be cute and cheeky, but they would also kind of echo stuff that already exists. What's funny is, Katie was mainly working on the Sparknotes type things, annotating Milton and Donne and whatnot.

The second purpose of Poetry Genius is to annotate The Poetry Foundation. These are meme poets who aren't taught in high school, but poetic kids are into their works. Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Robert Hass. And it's funny because Sarah got into annotating Frank O'Hara.

The third purpose is by far the coolest. I really hope it comes true, I tried really hard to make it happen but it kind of lost steam.³⁶⁶ The third purpose is for Poetry Genius to become the communication tool and social network for alt lit poets. "Alt Lit" is used as a somewhat derogatory term, but it is basically the only vibrant thing going on in poetry right now. "Alt Lit" is internet poetry. Basically, the alt lit poet is the "Tweeting Poet"³⁶⁷ - the whole aesthetic of the style comes from Twitter.

What if the center of the alt lit poet's identity shifted from Twitter to Poetry Genius? How crazy would that be?³⁶⁸ What if all the wannabe alt lit poets are sending Poetry Genius messages rather than texting or fb messaging or Snapchatting - just to make a statement? That is the only way you're gonna create a million Poetry Genius Verified Accounts - and whether it is Rap Genius or Rock or Poetry or News or Whatever Dogg Genius - I think Verified Accounts are the only true lodestone of success.³⁶⁹ Some dinosaur fucking college professor is never going to use her Verified Account, even if she sets one up. It is total bullshit. Academia is like Southern Rap - they are simply loathe to embrace technology. Alt Lit is like Poetry Genius' version of Kendrick Lamar

³⁶⁵ Notice that *none* of the 3 really end up being "Education Genius" - I don't really see the value of having students create annotations as school assignments - it is forced and unnatural. Teachers seem to want some sort of software, but they are total idiots. I don't really see the value of Poetry Genius being actively used in the classroom, I'd rather have the setup where students use Poetry Genius to ACTUALLY learn what they were supposed to have learned in class. (School is evil, I don't want Poetry Genius to be a part of school...)

³⁶⁶ It needs a leader! Are YOU down to lead this?

³⁶⁷ I am a Tweeting Poet

³⁶⁸ The *third* girl of the "Rap Genius Saga: Act 3" will be an alt lit poet - don't believe me just watch.

³⁶⁹ I HAVE a Poetry Genius Verified Account. I know. Until you are using the site to annotate your OWN shit, shit that you've written, you aren't fully 100% using the site. Having a Verified Account alters, and enhances, the Nature of Art.

HOW A POPULAR TWO-LETTER WORD IS UNDERMINING YOUR CREDIBILITY

"SO" INSULTS YOUR AUDIENCE

"SO" UNDERMINES YOUR CREDIBILITY

"SO" DEMONSTRATES THAT YOU'RE NOT 100% COMFORTABLE WITH WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

"So, we're building a multi-channel platform that leverages..."

"So, I'm the global brand director for our portfolio of..."

"So, I recently exited my startup when we sold to..."

IT'S ACTUALLY A DAMAGING TENDENCY

What you're about to say
is different than what you've been talking about up until this point.

Wait,

So Wendy, is this November?

So Wendy, are you willing to change your name to Lotter-mane like Gucci Mane?

So Wendy, what do you know bout dat #traplife?

So Wendy, what are the memes?

So Wendy, be honest [you never blaze before work?](#)

So Wendy, do you like pure sexual relationships?

So Wendy, when I come back do you think we could fuck day-of?

Wendy,

omission is an action.

Wendy,

our sex was like [nuts and dried fruit at the airport](#),

the kind of thing you eat when you're [23](#).

[My dream in life](#)

[is for you to make a Tumblr of stuff I say on Gchat and texts and everywhere.](#)

[In a sense, I am always auditioning for you.](#)

Wendy,

I'm all about universal death.

[A bird and a fish might say I love you on Gchat...but where would they build a home?](#)

We can't raise our children on Gchat, Wendy,

and I'm not moving to [Dobbs Ferry](#).

CARINA ACCENT / FELICIA APOSTROPHE JESUS/BUFFETT /

CHAPTER 18: CUMCLUSION

When I'm in the jacuzzi - and the foam starts rising - I sit languidly, contentedly. I await

the "rubber ducky" music to commence....

THE 3'S: 3 girls, 3 founders, 3 phases of rap genius, 3 locations - WHAT IS MYSTICAL ABOUT THIS NUMBER 3?

- rg fitness guy - I led the workouts
- value of curation - everyone makes music! CURATION is the high money thing
- IS RG BEING MANAGED WELL? it's probably like that thing (footnote: chapter 3, pg. 37, I said, "...") where I just don't get it, what you don't get you think there is nothing to get.

"I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter into one of the most creative periods of my life,"

"I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love." - STEVE JOBS

MY ULTIMATE DREAM: PG becomes the center of the Alt Lit scene. POETS: this COMPLETES your art form! You already have the message, it came before the medium this is the medium! Annotation will make everyone write poetry - all the people who don't write the poetry because they think "nah, nobody would get it..." - HUGE!!!

RULE OF 3'S (3 GIRLS, 3 FOUNDERS, 3 STAGES OF RAP GENIUS (EARLY, HIGH, DECADENCE)

18 CHAPTERS - PARANOID NUMEROLOGIST. LUCKINESS OF 13.

BEN HOROWITZ IS TRANS-BLACK , HE IS LIKE LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, "GOOD ORIENTALIST"