

ABSTRACT

CHASING AFTER WHEN

At the age of thirty, Vincent Van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo, “One doesn’t expect out of life what one has already learned it cannot give.” At thirty-four, I’m still learning what to expect out of life and what it cannot give, and this book, through a series of personal essays and memoir pieces, attempts to explore life after marriage and my wife’s infidelity, and is therefore full of loss, longing, and desire for something life cannot provide: enlightenment. These themes are explored through various subjects: dating, racism, a Buddhist monastery, bullfighting, Civil War re-enactments, beekeeping, and music, and all serve a central existential purpose—creating meaning out of experience and suffering. It’s an attempt to probe my own contradictions and multitudes, as well as those of others, sometimes with an eye toward empathy, other times with searing cynicism and criticism.

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