



## Good Morning

### Part One

1

I met a wonderful girl today named Good Morning. She's so young she looks just like new. I saw a picture of her on the Internet getting kissed on the cheek by a friend of mine. I wrote her to see if I might get the opportunity to do that too. Good Morning was skeptical at first, but we have dogs that bear the same name so that helped. She agreed to meet me for brunch and an afternoon walk around the inside of the American Museum of Natural History. The first time I saw her she was waiting for me from across the street. It doesn't matter what color her hair was or what color her eyes were or any other surface detail. The main thing is that she was wearing a tan coat that came down past her knees and made her look a little bit like a flasher. I liked her straight off. And it only got better.

2

I've been spending a lot of time with Good Morning. We've been inseparable since she returned from her trip ten days ago. Last night we had dinner with some of my friends. Good Morning is a special girl. She's real and delicate and intelligent and funny. I'm none of those things.

3

Today I have the flu so I'm just lying around like a black cat waiting for somebody to come near me so I can slink past and pass on the bad luck. It's been dreary as hell in New York lately, but my skin is thick and I don't get sad the way I did a few years ago.

4

It's Saturday night around midnight. I'm at home with my dog heating up a can of soup. As recently as a few weeks ago I had never heard of Good Morning, but now I would be lost if Good Morning were to find a new guy to hang around. It's almost impossible to imagine us as separate entities because we have so much to talk about. Good Morning went to a small private college where she studied art and thought about the meaning of life.



5

Good Morning took me out just last night to meet her college friends at a bar. All of them were intelligent and funny like she is. I hope some of their funny intelligence rubs off on me.

6

Today has been as perfect as a day can be. Honestly, it's been that good. Good Morning came over to my loft last night at 1:30 AM. She took off all her clothes and got in bed next to the dog and me. Good Morning went off to work early this morning when I was still asleep. I woke up next to a note on the pillow next to my head that said, "I love you." That's the first time she said that. I've been painting all afternoon listening to the radio. Now I'm having tea and a smoke.

7

It's warm in New York City again – not too warm – but warmer than it's been. My roommate came home this afternoon and told me she's moving out at the end of the month to live with her boyfriend who's much older than she is. They are moving to Queens. I went for a walk with Good Morning in the park to think it over. Good Morning is a good listener. I'm not sure if Good Morning and I are falling in love or what it is we think we're doing exactly.

8

I'm watching the Grammy Awards on television with my dog next to me on the bed. The temperature outside is very cold just like the temperature inside – there is no difference between the two. This morning I had brunch with Good Morning and her mom in Tribeca. The mom and the daughter look a lot alike. The mom once worked for an artist in New York before she moved out of the city with her husband who is also a nice guy. She called the artist a narcissist. I made a mental note of that. Then I went to my studio. I made some drawings and I'm working on some new paintings.

9

Good Morning and I are becoming close. Our attraction is strong and much deeper than the adult end of the YMCA swimming pool where I almost drowned once when I was a child.



10

I'm in my unnamed friend's bed watching *Seinfeld*, but I'm not paying close attention because what I'm really doing is waiting for my favorite show *American Idol* to start. My unnamed friend is in Tahiti with a young Brazilian guy having the time of his life. Meanwhile, I'm enjoying his absence like chocolate ice cream. I come out here to my unnamed friend's place once a week. It's quite relaxing and when I get back to New York I'm that much happier because I am calm. It's hard to feel calm when you live in a big city like New York. Calmness is a commodity so rare that even the super rich can't afford it.

11

There is a slight depression inside of my stomach and it is growing, edging its way up toward my brain. The depression is making me hate everything I make and it's making me want to leave the city, but it's not making me hate Good Morning. Good Morning and I are together all the time. She has some of my artworks hanging in her bedroom where we sleep together almost every night.

12

Good Morning and I went to a museum today to see a show of beautiful paintings by a great artist who committed suicide. Good Morning and I jumped right into the paintings with our brains. It was like we were at her parents' house splashing around in the pool out back. Her dad was cooking up some burgers on the grill and her mom was inside setting the table for supper. Her sisters were arguing about a boy.

## **Part two**

1

Time sneaks up on you and before you know it your time to be in one place is up and suddenly you are in a new place and you are a new person. I've only been out of New York a few months, but it is already a different life all together. The American Museum of Natural History and Good Morning are far away now. Good Morning and I haven't been in touch much. The technological devices we depend on for long distance communication are malfunctioning.



2

I had to see Good Morning so I went back to New York for a visit. My time there was good and bad. It was good because I ate a lot of good food. It was bad because Good Morning and I couldn't get along no matter what we tried to do. Good Morning doesn't understand why I left town and she's not making that a secret. Good Morning is frustrated with me and I am frustrated with Good Morning. That's just the way it is. I wish I could make Good Morning understand, but she doesn't want to hear it. Good Morning is too attractive for understanding. There are many guys who would like to take her out to fancy restaurants. She has a number of outfits that are perfect for that sort of thing.

3

Now that I'm back here in this unfamiliar place of peaceful thoughts where girls do not look or talk like Good Morning, I'm beginning to enjoy the solitude. It's really something to be out here in the Midwest with my dog and my pickup truck that gets twelve miles to the gallon. I'm getting a lot of work done. It's significantly easier to paint now that Good Morning is out of the picture.

4

I'm attending the funeral of an unnamed family member tomorrow down South. The unnamed family member was, until two days ago, a heroin addict. Now he's a painting titled, "Portrait of a Dead Man at Twenty-Eight." Before he killed himself he robbed some convenience stores because he needed money to buy drugs. I didn't know he was a heroin addict until now because nobody in the family talks about ugliness. The unnamed family member decided it was better to die than to go on being in the family. Good Morning and all things related to Good Morning were insignificant for at least a few hours while I was at the funeral.

5

I took a trip out West to meet a friend. We both thought it would help put the Good Morning break up to bed. We stayed at a pleasing hotel one night in the center of a small town with excellent public transportation. In each room there was an old fashioned record player and a stack of good records. I put on a good record. Then I opened the window and looked outside and thought about Good Morning. Good Morning is very far away I thought to myself.



6

I left my friend and took a small plane to a town in northern California where hippie outlaws do a lot of gardening. I met my sister and some of her friends at a small airport the size of my thumbnail. My sister and her friends were more relaxed than any group of people I've ever seen in my life. I was up there with them for a week. We camped outside on the side of a mountain. The mountain provided, among other things, a great place to read. I got a suntan. Wild boars would sometimes make a lot of noise in the night, but we didn't mind because we were too drunk to care about a damn thing.

7

I talked to some friends on my cell phone about life in the Midwest the other day. Everybody in New York is curious about life here because they've never been to this part of the world before. The Midwest is far away from New York. It's as far away as the moon is from Earth. I tell my friends about Good Morning and how she's ruining my life because she won't talk to me anymore. Everybody says there will be good mornings in the future, but I don't believe it.

8

Today was painful for some arbitrary reason that makes no sense to anybody, not even to smart people who attend Ivy League schools. Breaking up is not an easy thing to do.

9

My physical appearance is drawing attention because I am wearing a big thick dark beard and a shaved head. I look pretty scary like I might blow something up.

10

Sometimes I romanticize the old days in New York, which aren't old days at all since they just happened a year ago. I called a friend who lives there and he told me not to worry about it – he says that New York wasn't so great then and it's not so great now and that I shouldn't turn it into something it isn't in my mind. My mind turns things into things they aren't all the time, but I didn't say that to my friend. I just said, "Thanks."



11

Now I'd like to do a brief recap of a recent trip: I drove to New York City in my truck a few days before the end of the year. I spent one night at a cheap hotel on the way. The next day I went in through the Holland Tunnel. This time of year is so pretty in New York because of all the Christmas lights and decorations in the shop windows. I took the truck over the Williamsburg Bridge and followed Manhattan Avenue all the way out to the end where a friend of mine lives. My friend has been living in the same four-story walk up apartment a long time. He likes it there. I must admit that the appeal of the neighborhood never made much sense to me until this trip. It always seemed like a hard-to-get-to kind of place. But this time it was perfect. Even cold nights sleeping on the floor with my dog didn't bother me. Then I went down to Baltimore. I stayed one night in the crappy one-room apartment my friend is renting near the north end of downtown. We went out drinking and ended up walking home at 4 or 5 AM through desolate streets. I drove back to New York for New Year's Eve and tried to put on a good face for the party. The next day I went to Good Morning's apartment to get some of my things. I was shocked to see all of my paintings and drawings still on the walls.

12

A lot of time has passed. I miss Good Morning a great deal. If Good Morning saw my new paintings she would think I am an insane person because the paintings contain feelings of anger and frustration. But hiding behind the anger and frustration are good feelings that sincerely wish she wasn't so far away. Although Good Morning and the American Museum of Natural History are gone, I often imagine us together. We roam the halls and she still looks a lot like a flasher in her tan coat.