

The 10 Pages Of Wonder

Birth, Death, and Everything We Did Not Ask For

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Introduction

Nobody asked to be born. You were placed into this world without consent, without a warning, and without a manual. From your first breath, the terms of your existence were already set __ you would feel things, lose things, want things, and eventually leave. That is the deal. That is the trade-off of being human.

This booklet explores what it means to carry that deal. It looks at birth not just as a celebration, but as the beginning of exposure. It looks at death not just as an ending, but as the only guaranteed relief from everything that comes in between. And it looks at life __ the long, uneven stretch between the two __ as the thing we have to figure out for ourselves.

This is not a self-help guide. It does not promise answers. It simply asks you to look honestly at the human condition __ the weight of it, the complexity of it, and yes, the value of it __ without dressing it up in language that makes it sound better or worse than it actually is.

The goal is straightforward: to understand what we are dealing with as human beings, so that we can deal with it better.

Chapter 1: The Liability of Human Flesh

To be human is to be vulnerable. The body you were given is both the instrument of your experience and the source of your limitations. It feels pleasure, but it also feels pain. It heals, but it also breaks. It carries you through life, but it also holds you back.

This is what is meant by the liability of human flesh. It is not a criticism of the body. It is simply the reality of having one. Every experience you will ever have __ joy, love, grief, hunger, exhaustion, fear __ will pass through that body. You cannot separate yourself from it. You are it.

That is the first trade-off. To feel the good things, you must also be available to feel the bad things. There is no selective switch. Sensitivity does not come with conditions. The same capacity that allows you to feel the warmth of belonging is the same capacity that makes rejection sting. The same heart that loves is the same heart that breaks.

"To feel the good things, you must also be available to feel the bad things."

This is not a flaw in the design. It is the design. The question is not how to avoid the liability of being human. The question is how to carry it without being destroyed by it.

Chapter 2: Birth ___ The Gift You Did Not Choose

Birth is celebrated everywhere. Every culture, every family, every community marks it as a moment of joy. And there is real joy in it. A new life is a remarkable thing. The arrival of a person into the world carries genuine weight and meaning.

But birth is also the beginning of exposure. The moment you are born, the clock starts. From that point forward, you will accumulate experience ___ good and bad, wanted and unwanted. You will love people who leave. You will build things that fall apart. You will try and fail. You will want things you cannot have. You will lose things you cannot replace.

None of that is waiting for you at birth. But all of it is coming. That is what birth really is ___ not just the start of life, but the start of everything life carries with it.

Scenario: The Child Born into Hardship

Consider a child born into a difficult environment ___ poverty, instability, or conflict. The people around them celebrate the birth. There is love, there is hope. But the world this child is entering is already stacked against them. Their birth is both a genuine celebration and the opening of a long, difficult road.

This does not make their birth less valuable. It makes the point more clearly: birth is not a guarantee of ease. It is the beginning of a particular life, in a particular set of circumstances, with all the challenges those circumstances bring. To celebrate birth honestly is to celebrate the whole person ___ including everything they will have to face.

Chapter 3: The Agony of Living

Life, in its most honest form, is not a smooth experience. It is made up of rejections, losses, disappointments, guilt, regret, and confusion __ alongside moments of real happiness, connection, and meaning. Both are real. Both are part of the same life.

The problem is that most of us are not taught to expect the difficult parts. We are taught to pursue happiness and avoid pain, which creates a false standard. When the pain arrives __ and it always arrives __ it feels like failure. Like something has gone wrong. When in fact, nothing has gone wrong. Life is simply doing what it does.

The Weight of Rejection

Rejection is one of the earliest and most repeated human experiences. As a child, you are left out. As a teenager, you are overlooked. As an adult, you are passed over __ in relationships, in careers, in friendships. The specific details change, but the experience of not being chosen is something almost every person knows.

The weight of rejection is not just emotional. It shapes how people see themselves. It builds walls. It teaches people to protect themselves before they get hurt. Over time, it can quietly narrow a person's world __ fewer risks taken, fewer connections made, fewer chances at the things that actually matter.

The Weight of Regret

Regret is another consistent companion. The things you said that you cannot take back. The chances you did not take. The relationships you let fade. The version of yourself you were supposed to become. Regret lives in the gap between what happened and what could have happened, and that gap never fully closes.

What makes regret particularly heavy is that it is retrospective. There is nothing you can do about it in the present. You can only carry it, learn from it, or refuse to let it define you. None of those options make it disappear.

"Regret lives in the gap between what happened and what could have happened."

Chapter 4: Death ___ The Cure We Fear

Death cures everything. Every rejection, every regret, every source of pain ___ death ends all of it. That is not a dark thought. It is simply true. Whatever you are carrying right now, you will not be carrying it forever. At some point, the weight stops.

And yet we fear death more than almost anything else. We go to great lengths to avoid it, to delay it, to not think about it. We build entire systems ___ medical, religious, cultural ___ around managing our relationship with the fact that we are going to die.

Why? The most honest answer is that we do not know what comes after. Death is the one experience no one has reported back from. Every belief about it ___ heaven, reincarnation, nothing at all ___ is exactly that: a belief. Not knowledge. Not certainty. We are walking toward something we cannot see, and that uncertainty is genuinely frightening.

The Unknown Beyond

The fear of death is largely a fear of the unknown. If we knew ___ really knew ___ what happened after death, the fear would change shape. It might not disappear entirely, but it would be a different kind of fear. Fear of something specific is manageable. Fear of something completely uncertain is harder to live with.

This is why so many people find comfort in religious or spiritual beliefs about death. Not necessarily because those beliefs are proven, but because they replace uncertainty with a framework. They give the unknown a shape. And a shaped unknown is easier to face than a shapeless one.

Scenario: The Person at the End of Their Life

Consider someone who has lived a full life ___ decades of experience, relationships, work, loss, joy. As they approach the end, many people report not fearing death itself, but fearing the process of dying. They fear pain, loss of dignity, and being a burden to others. The death itself ___ the actual stopping ___ often becomes less frightening the closer it gets.

This suggests that the fear of death is partly a fear of the living. Of what we will lose before we go. Of the people we will leave behind. Death, in that sense, is not just personal. It is relational. It affects everyone connected to you.

Chapter 5: Holding On When Life Is Heavy

Given everything that has been said __ the liability of the flesh, the exposure that begins at birth, the agony that runs through life, the fear of death __ the reasonable question is: why do most people keep going?

The answer is not dramatic. It is not a grand reason or a philosophical insight. Most people keep going because of small things. A person they love. A task that still needs doing. A habit that carries them through the morning. Something they are curious about. Something they have not yet seen or tried or finished.

These small things are underrated. They do not fix the hard parts of life. They do not answer the big questions. But they create just enough forward motion to get through another day. And sometimes, another day is all you need.

The Quiet Courage of Ordinary People

There is a kind of courage that does not get much attention. It is not the courage of dramatic moments __ battles, crises, turning points. It is the courage of ordinary people getting up every morning and returning to a life that is imperfect, uncertain, and sometimes painful.

This is the most common form of human resilience. Not heroism. Not transformation. Just a continuation. Showing up again. Trying again. Carrying what you have to carry and still finding a reason to move forward.

"Continuation is its own form of courage."

Scenario: The Person Who Lost Everything

Consider someone who has experienced significant loss __ a partner, a career, a sense of identity. From the outside, it may look like nothing is left. But most people in that position will tell you that something pulls them forward. It is rarely something big. It might be a child who needs them. A friend who called. A project they started and have not finished. Something small that creates just enough reason to stay.

This is not inspiration. It is just the reality of how most people survive the hardest parts of their lives. They do not find a grand answer. They find a small reason. And they use it.

Chapter 6: What We Do With the Time We Did Not Ask For

Nobody asked to be born. Nobody gets to choose when they die. The time in between ___ however long or short, however difficult or good ___ is what we actually have. That space, that window of experience, is where everything happens.

It is where you love people. Where you build things. Where you make decisions you will carry for years. Where you fail and recover, or sometimes fail and do not. It is where you find out what you are made of, not in one moment, but across a thousand ordinary ones.

The question is not whether you deserved this life or wanted it or feel ready for it. The question is what you do with it. Not in a motivational sense. Not as pressure. Simply as a practical matter: this is what you have. What are you going to do with it?

Acceptance Without Surrender

There is a difference between accepting the difficult parts of life and surrendering to them. Acceptance means seeing things clearly ___ the pain is real, the uncertainty is real, the losses are real ___ and continuing anyway. Surrender means letting those things determine everything. Letting them close you down.

Most people spend their lives somewhere between the two. They accept some things and fight others. They carry certain losses and refuse to carry others. This is not an inconsistency. It is how humans actually work. We are not built for perfect clarity or complete peace. We are built for negotiation ___ with life, with ourselves, with the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Scenario: Two People, Same Loss

Two people experience the same kind of loss ___ the end of a long relationship. One person allows the loss to close them off. They stop trying. They protect themselves from ever being in that position again. The other person grieves fully, takes time, and eventually opens themselves up again ___ not because the hurt went away, but because they decided the possibility of connection was worth the risk of more hurt.

Neither response is wrong. Both are human. But the second response reflects something important: that the trade-off of being human — the vulnerability that comes with feeling — is worth taking, again and again, even after it has cost you something.

Conclusion: Neither Birth Nor Death ___ The Space Between

The trade-offs that come with being human are not a mistake. They are the terms. To be born is to accept exposure. To live is to be shaped by everything that exposure brings ___ the good and the difficult, the chosen and the unchosen. To die is to eventually be released from all of it.

We tend to frame birth as entirely good and death as entirely bad. But the honest view is more complicated. Birth opens a door to suffering as much as it opens a door to joy. Death closes that door ___ which can feel like loss for those left behind, but for the person leaving, may be closer to rest than anything else.

None of this is meant to make life sound hopeless. The point is the opposite. When you understand what life actually involves ___ not the version dressed up in easy optimism, but the real version, with all its weight and uncertainty ___ then the fact that people continue, that they love and build and try again, becomes genuinely remarkable.

You did not ask to be here. You will not be here forever. But right now, you are. And in that space ___ between the birth you did not choose and the death you cannot avoid ___ there is still a great deal that belongs entirely to you.

What you pay attention to. Who you show up for. What you decide to carry and what you decide to put down. How honest you are with yourself about what is hard and what is worth it. These are not small things. They are, in fact, the only things.

"In the space between the birth you did not choose and the death you cannot avoid, there is still a great deal that belongs entirely to you."

That is the trade-off of being human. And for most people, in the end ___ with all of it accounted for ___ it turns out to be worth taking.

About the Author

Paul Mothapo

Paul Mothapo is a human, Just like you. Nothing more to say and nothing less to say.