

# An Assemblage of Fragmentary Contemplations & Idle Thoughts

*A collection  
of essays &  
poetry on  
life, work, &  
the pursuit  
of happiness*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF  
FRAGMENTARY  
CONTEMPLATIONS & IDLE  
THOUGHTS



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A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS & POETRY ON  
LIFE, WORK, & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

THE BLACKHORSE PUBLISHING COMPANY  
*DUBLIN, IRELAND.*



Publisher; The Blackhorse Publishing Company, Dublin, Ireland.

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eBook ISBN 9781370493685

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<https://larrygmaguire.com>

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## DEDICATION

*I wish to dedicate this book to my mother, Bridget Philomena (Phyllis) Bryan. She read my newsletter most weeks as far as I know, and would say to my father, "if I want to know what's going on with Lar I need to read about it. He doesn't talk".*

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## PREFACE

I suppose I should start with the title.

## READER RESOURCES

Larry Maguire has been writing essays and poetry, recording podcast material and publishing online since 2014. You can subscribe to receive this material free for free at the following locations online.

### ONLINE

- Personal website:  
<https://larrymaguire.com>
- The Performatist:  
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- What Is Resilience? A Definitive Guide To Coping
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*A few words of thanks to those who have  
influenced and support my work*

This book is the product of many years of thought, contemplation, action, success, failure, trial and error, and although the words herein are mine, they have not arisen from a vacuum. My influences are many, however, primarily I would like to thank my mother Phyllis Bryan and my Father Laurence Peter Maguire, without whom I would not exist in the particular idiosyncratic version of myself as I currently do. Thanks is also due to my ongoing supporters. In no particular order, they are;

Bobby Kountz

Simon O'Shaughnessy

Michael Donovan

John-Oliver Breckoff

# A LETTER TO MY CHILDREN



*Life will present many challenges. When it  
does, consider these things.*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

When you find yourself in unfamiliar territory, stay on the edge. Take your time and survey things. Look for the key aspects you need to function successfully in the space. Look for key people too; the ones to avoid and the ones with whom you need to stay close. Take your time and consider all your options; your entry and exit strategy, and the length of time you'll stay in the game. Don't rush in smiling and

enthusiastic. Stay reserved, calculated, and open to whatever presents itself. Seek internal guidance, avoid rash decisions, digest the variables, and trust your intuition. Delay judgement for only as long as is necessary.

It's like rugby, hurling or football. Practice relentlessly and always aim to beat your previous best by the smallest of allowable fractions. You decide what that looks like, nobody else. There is no competition. All competition lives and dies, starts and ends with you. Whatever you are and the feelings you feel are all that matters in the game. Your concept of yourself, your assessment of your relationship to your experiences, and your resulting actions will always dictate your results. Readiness is born from momentum, and you build momentum in the hours of practice. All failures are successes. There is only learning and growth. Keep your powder dry. Avoid preaching and stay humble. No one else needs to know your success or failure, and if they do, they'll find you of their own accord.

In the game there will be periods, sometimes lengthy, when you'll feel like all is lost. Stay focused on the job at hand and do not allow your mind to drift to fanciful notions of glitter and gold, praise and reward, or fault or self-incrimination. Both are

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thoughts that will take you down. There is only now and the work you need to do. So focus. Put the blinkers on and go deep. Get comfortable in your discomfort, and it will pass. All losses, just like the wins, are designed to fool you into your worthlessness or greatness, but neither one will last. They are unsubstantial things. The essential aspect in all success and failure is that you allow yourself to feel. Learn to celebrate and disregard both.

Whatever the question, the answer will come of itself. Do not force, coerce, coax or attempt to bring it about by some wrangle or trick, for you will trick yourself. You do not need to find it; it finds you. Work with others but do not become dependent, for no matter how well-meaning, they will always be otherwise motivated and will eventually let you down. Do not pedestalise people — they are just as prone to fault as you. There is no safety in numbers, so don't follow the crowd. Like a herd of sheep, they are incapable of independent thought and action and will take you over the edge of a cliff. Instead, see which way the majority move and choose a different direction.

Give your time to idle things like walking in the woods. Seek solitude daily — you'll find the answers to your most burning questions there. Taoist

philosopher Lao Tzu said; “in the past there is depression, in the future there is anxiety, in the present there is peace”. Remember the three rules I gave you; 1) Break the rules. 2) Don’t get caught. 2) Respect all things. These rules are inextricably linked, like the three legs on a stool. Just like the stool, remove one and you fall over. No matter how much people say they care for you, they will sacrifice you for the sake of the rules. Trust your family, but don’t lean too much. Remember; it always comes down to you and you alone. Set your own rules and live by them until the time comes to change them. Change is the only constant, so allow it to be your friend.

Trust yourself; in life’s darkest moments, you’re all you’ve got.

2

HOW TO FIND  
HAPPINESS  
THROUGH DAILY  
WORK



*Technology is pervasive in society and soon it  
will take your job. How then will you find  
meaning and purpose in life?*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

We seem to have it all. Modern conveniences abound, and technology is ubiquitous with life. Over the past 150 years, the human race has advanced to

the point where we're on the brink of widespread automation of societal systems and daily work. Intelligent machines are already here, and soon, some suggest by 2035, artificial intelligence will carry out many of our traditional working roles in a broad spectrum of industries.

It's coming fast, and it will change everything. Human beings as workforce commodities, it seems, are to become defunct shortly.

So with machines doing the work, you and I will need to find something else to occupy our days. But given our sense of value and personal worth is caught up in the idea that we must work hard and be productive, something dramatic will need to shift in us.

Currently, we gauge our sense of worthiness on our ability to work within the machine of society. Those who do not work we see as useless and almost less than human. They don't deserve beautiful things or the luxury of a safe, warm place to live. They are not allowed the best of medical care. We have enough food and resources on the planet to support everyone to a very high standard, but we don't. You don't work; you don't get. This situation exists in all western industrialised nations to varying degrees.

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So when the day comes that machines are doing the majority of the work, where does that leave us?

What will we do to *deserve* a reasonable lifestyle?

Who will decide what that lifestyle looks like and who qualifies?

How, then, will we fill our days?

I don't have an answer to all these questions, but there seem to be solutions available if we are brave and intelligent enough to execute them. Unfortunately, I don't believe in our current psychological state we are capable of embracing the level of change necessary.

The reason I believe so is that survival-of-the-fittest is the ruling state of mind of western industrialised society. It is subtle, hidden within the fabric of normality, going unnoticed most of the time. It is the capitalist model for life and work, and if you care to take the time, you will see it's clear. It's like death by a thousand cuts, every cut taking a little piece of our humanity.

We pretend to care about others, but we are so obsessed with getting through today, with preserving our sense of self and getting ahead, we have no thought for others. Unless someone puts the blood

on the table, it's business as usual, and sometimes, even that's not quite enough.

The idea that we must compete to survive has been developed and promoted by people we consider the most reliable and trustworthy in society. Those who have successfully exploited people and resources for personal and corporate gain are the ones we admire most. These corporate entities create the illusion of an open market manipulating shallow-minded, short-sighted politicians, and engineering the consent of populations.

The commercially and financially powerful reflect on their material success and suggest that they succeeded because they beat the competition. You and I can achieve the same success if we work hard. They say that competition aids innovation and provides the best model for success for all. Promoters of the competitive capitalist model say it provides jobs and wealth for everyone if we are willing to work hard for it.

But it doesn't work that way. This notion that we must compete and defeat those weaker than us for the spoils is limited, parochial and ultimately self-destructive. It allows us to justify all kinds of horrific and inhumane behaviour.

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Global wealth is not distributed equally, and everyone does not have equal opportunity. Most people do ok by all modern standards of success, just enough to keep them content and servile. The exploited minorities on the lower edges have no power and little prospects. The gilded minority on the upper fringes hold control and keep the middle majority subdued and content by dangling carrots and selling us shit we don't need.

The jobs they give us serve to increase corporate wealth and enslave us in a system heavily weighted in their favour. They sell us on the dream, and we fall for it. We believe in the capitalist system, we take their jobs, and we pursue the elusive universal goal of wealth and success.

Consequently, our daily work has become a means to an end. And that end is to trade hours for cash to pay bills and repay debt, to buy stuff — stuff that is supposed to make us happy.

But it doesn't.

I'm not promoting the idea that we should blame others for our dissatisfaction with life. I'm not suggesting that we should stand and point the finger at corporations for manipulating us with their propaganda marketing. Neither do I think you and I should blame our teachers and parents for leading

us down the garden path — they fell for the false promise just like we did.

Instead, I am pointing the finger firmly at you, and at me, for failing to notice. It's our fault for choosing the comfort of job security over the challenge and short-term discomfort of following our creative impulses.

We have been unconscious co-conspirators in the creation of the current worldwide state of affairs by accepting what they told us without question. We have denied ourselves the right to freedom and creative expression by adopting the standard working model for life and work.

We have created it all by blind obedience and an unwillingness to question the standard model. And so it is up to us to change it.

I accept that not everyone is at odds with their daily work, but many are. However, to drop everything and leave your current job may not be the right option. After all, you're in the system, and you need money to live. The solution, therefore, is to make peace with it, at least until you can build something new.

Ultimately though, if we are to create meaning and discover happiness in our lives, we need to find work that stimulates, that draws us in. After all, we spend

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the best years of our lives working, so what better reason is there to engage in something we love? Also, technology is taking over jobs that humans currently do so soon we will be left with no choice.

Some say working at something you love is not enough — there's got to be something else we must do to find success. Well, firstly, success is arbitrary and subjective, not universal. Secondly, the undeniable truth is that if we don't enjoy the work we do, then no amount of ulterior motivation will sustain us.

Immersion in enjoyable daily work, must first and foremost, be our motivation. Only then can something worthwhile come about. I've had too many personal examples of this and read many other testimonies of others who assert the same. They may not have said it as I have, but it seems to be the same thing.

Curiosity is the seed, and it grows if we follow where it takes us. Often that runs counter to the prevailing narrative, but we must develop the ability to ignore that and listen to the small voice instead.

Because one day soon we'll be gone. Everyone we know will be gone too. It's a sobering thought, but in

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

consideration of that inevitable fact, there is no more significant reason to do the work that calls us.

In that, there is the meaning of life — for me. Your's may be different, but you have an obligation to yourself to find it.

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# THERE IS NO TIME



*A poem about temporal reality*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

There is no time, things just is you see,  
In the house of my mind where the child I did be.  
Seconds, minutes, hours, days, structured things,  
Are merely of my mind, man's creation brings.

Tempus fugit! My old man used to say,  
Nothing left to the world but my thoughts this day.  
Flower rock beast, tree, they have no time for me.  
For they just are.

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

They exist in my mind you see.  
Much like my whole earth, mountain sky and sea.  
None mark this friendless face and wish,  
They were somewhere else, where they'd be  
happier...ish

No, it's not for me to want for time to pass,  
for there is no better place for my spirit to last,  
Than this universe, the one mind has gifted,  
To one part of the whole,

Let my heart be lifted,  
To the heights of the sky,  
To the heavens and say,  
There is no time, just my thoughts this day.

# TO THOSE IN PURSUIT OF SUCCESS



*Our material, future based ideas of success,  
are ghosts in the machines of our minds. Here's  
a better idea for which to live.*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

Last Thursday I went to carry out a small job in Smithfield near where I live. When I arrived on the job at 7:30 (early start for me these days) there was an owl boy busy sanding and prepping the large red entrance door to the adjacent building.

He was a small man. I thought he must have been 70 if he was a day. He had a neatly trimmed white goatee beard and wore barely white painter's overalls. He moved like a man who was in no hurry, who had long since left behind the felt pressure of a demanding daily grind. Come to think of it, he was no more in a hurry than any other painter I have ever seen in action. No offence lads.

It struck me that he was retired. He must have been working because he needed to, or maybe because he didn't. Either way, he was a tradesman, and me being one too, eyeball to eyeball, we exchanged the customary half-head turn accompanied by; "howya".

The laneway was narrow with space for about ten cars and ran to a dead-end and the back entrance to Frank Ryan's pub. I was too late to grab a parking space so I double-parked. I asked the old painter to give me a shout if anyone needed me to move. He said he would, and I went about my business.

When I got finished, the old painter was standing outside, a cup of black tea in one hand, a buttered slice of brack in the other and we got talking. He told me about his son, a spark like me, who moved to New Zealand 10 years ago. He asked if I had children and we chatted about family for a while.

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We spoke about work and business. He told me about the three golf clubs of which he was a member and how it was the social connections he made there that kept him in business during lean times — over 40 years he said. I told him how I wasn't as fortunate. We spoke about the demands of business, of dealing with employees and labour court visits, of chasing money, picking up new work, and the challenge feeding the ever hungrier beast that was the separate businesses we ran.

We agreed that running a small business was never going to make us rich — we'd long since dropped that self-deception, even though those on the outside had different ideas of what success looked like. Most people you see, those who never sample the challenges of running a small business, believe in the persistent illusion that those of us who do must be wealthy.

We mocked them thoroughly.

I enjoyed the conversation and could have stayed talking for hours. He knew what I knew you see. He walked a similar road to me and learned what I had learned. He understood the reality of business, he had lived a life and came to realise what success really meant.

I don't think many people do.

Maybe that's how it's supposed to be. But then again, maybe it's not.

*"The fool who persists in his folly will become wise." –  
William Blake*

Many people hold to the common illusion of success. They see the glitter of bright shiny things in the hands of beautiful people and become hypnotised. They become blinded by ambition to become what they have seen, to realise the illusion of success. But it's a ghost in the machine of their minds, a fabrication built by a collective, drunk on the idea of material wealth.

When I look around me at people in business, art, sport or whatever, both starting out and established, it seems the pursuit of success is relentless. It's all about the win, the status, the material gain, the money in the bank.

So they pursue it, and it never fills the void.

Don't be one of those.

Don't be a dope that falls for the colourful talk of the marketers and salespeople who live on the thin crust of reality that we call modern life. Don't allow

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their red ties and clever language designed to pander to your emotional and often irrational needs to dupe yourself.

Instead, think. Or better still, don't think. Allow yourself to do your work, whatever it is, for its own sake. Do your daily work for the thrill and enjoyment that it gives you and drop your ill-founded designs on success.

Extrinsic motivations will get you nowhere in the end. In fact, they will form and take you to an end, a painful one. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from an inner place and has no end.

When we are engaged in work that engages us, that brings us fulfilment and happiness in the right-now-moment of doing it, that in itself is the goal completed. And there's no end to it. It is where work becomes art.

Whatever your work, make sure it's the right work, work that sustains you. Anything else is a wasted life.



# A MONDAY TO FRIDAY SORT OF DYING



LARRY G. MAGUIRE

It was April 2014, and as I sat outside an office building on Grand Parade in Dublin waiting to go into a meeting, I watched dozens upon dozens of people scramble along the footpath to their jobs. Blank stares, blinkers on, moving in droves as the traffic signals changed. Oblivious to their broader surroundings and perhaps immersed in their own private turmoil. Lost in the prospect of another day, subjugated under the impersonal and invisible hand of the ruler. Men, women and prefer-not-to-says,

CEOs, directors, managers, and rank & file, trading themselves in for carrots and applause.

How many of these people had a 5:30 start, or perhaps earlier, just to get their kids to the creche or child-minder? How many of these children wouldn't be collected until 6:00pm or 7:00pm that evening? Do all these people endure this labourious slog every single day? How many others, obsessed with achievement and ambition, will sacrifice their humanity and individuality for the sake of acceptance and the ideal worker image? All of them working, albeit for a wage, under the command of others. Is it any different to slavery? Linguist and activist Noam Chomsky would say not.

*“...if a person works, if a person does beautiful work under external command, meaning for wages, we may admire what he does but we despise what he is. Because he's not a free human being.”*

On the opposite side of the road there were three young men laughing and joking. I thought maybe they were still drunk from the night before. Whether or not they were was incidental, because the contrast they offered against the dull grayness of the crowd was stark. I thought, why do we work this way, sacrificing our lives and happiness for the grind of

daily work? Why does daily work represent such a negative aspect of life experience for so many?

It was the start of my exploration into the nature and value of work, and here I am today, still writing on this topic. I wrote an undergraduate thesis on the subject in 2020, later refined and published as a piece of peer reviewed academic work. Results of the study found at least 42% of respondents were in one form or other at odds with their work. 53% said they had a positive relationship with work, but on a recent review of the data and considering caveats offered, this figure seems to be much less. The remainder, a mere 5%, reported loving their work without exception.

Historian Studs Terkel said about daily work in his 1972 book *Working*; “to survive the day is triumph enough for the walking wounded among the great many of us. It is about a search too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying”.

As we, albeit forcibly, take the time allocated us in this strange period of existence to reconsider our lives... how do you wish to proceed?

Will you die from Monday to Friday, only to live on

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weekends and dread on Sunday evening the coming  
of Monday?

Or will you engage in work that makes you smile?

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# WHEN I WAS ALIVE



*A poem about the struggle of work*

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

Furrowed brow, vacant stare,  
Mind focused, yet unaware.  
Knuckles tight as I make my way.  
Here we go, another day.

Immersed, I am, in things to do.  
Brass plate, responsibility, held umbilically  
Without it, I am who?  
A lie.

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

Drink – it's Friday night.  
A chance to escape the fight.  
The endless toil, given me by whom?  
Le grand Autre, I have succumbed to you.

Driving.  
Radio's on.  
I can hear it.  
It carries me along.

Making my way every single day  
40 years now, wasted away  
Doing things you know I'd rather not  
Before, I almost forgot

For the sake of bright shiny things  
Intangible now.  
You know I'd trade it all in  
For that feeling I had when I was a boy  
It was easy then... when I was alive

# THE HELLO TREE



LARRY G. MAGUIRE

Hello tree, it's me.  
I'm still today, but I don't often be.  
Here in my place quietly, contemplating myself,  
unable to see,  
The nature of you beyond my door,  
Within the void, no life, no sense, no more.  
That space between me and you  
Where there is nothing real  
Only illusion to,  
  
The world of form where we both lose  
But regain again if we so choose  
The things we lost if willing to wait  
For eternal night to come by our laboured gait.

LARRY G. MAGUIRE

As it always does, never to end  
Please tell me tree, will I amend?

Hello tree, I envy thee.

You know that not yet known to me.

Hidden from me, beyond my sight.

Below the chaos, the love, the hate, the calm, the  
fight.

Something familiar but cannot find

Does it lives in you?

Are we but one of a kind?

I think we are please say it's so,

For in this world I can barely go,

Another day beneath this charge

Given me without disparage

That I must hold, alone here

Until that day when all becomes clear

Hello tree, please tell me so

There cannot be much more to go

For me until I realise

I was loved by that which underlies

The world I made in my will to live

And gain the spoils rather than give

A second to that great love of mine

Which I forgot, which was lost in time

And now there is I and just you tree

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Please tell me what is to be  
Now all is silent, my heart bereft  
Just you and me, there's no one left  
Hello tree, tell me it is true  
Tell me what I always knew  
You were I and I was you.

## APPENDIX

This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.