

# SY SAFRANSKY'S NOTEBOOK

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**I STOPPED WRITING, BUT NOTHING ELSE STOPPED.** The days kept getting longer, then shorter, then longer again. The bombs fell, then stopped, then fell again.

**FOR YEARS, THERE WASN'T ENOUGH MONEY TO** pay the bills on time. Nor were there enough hours in the day to finish my work and get a good night's sleep. Now the bills are paid, but I'm still a pauper in the land of dreams. Enough already! I need to respect my body's need for the kind of rest and illumination only dreams can bring. I need to honor the dark, the hidden, everything I can't bend to my will.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DON'T SHOW UP FOR AN** important dream? Is that like not showing up for an important class? And when we die, what then? Do we stop dreaming? Don't we make guest appearances in other dreams?

**I GLANCE AT MY WATCH, THEN COUNT HOW MANY** hours are left in the day. How reassuring to know my place in the Mystery. This is time's little gift for me, the shining hook in the endless sea.

**I DREAMT THAT THE BASEMENT WINDOWS NEED-**ed to be replaced because the wood was rotting. This surprised me: I hadn't realized I'd been living here that long. Then it struck me — I'm fifty-eight! — and I awoke with a start. Maybe the deepest mysteries aren't those we've yet to discover but those we live with every day. These bodies — magnificent bodies — grow older. Now and then we check the foundation. Surprise, surprise: We live in homes that crumble. And we never know when we'll be summoned to get out of bed and leave through the nearest exit. No, we don't need to pack an overnight bag.

**YOGANANDA: "BE CHEERFUL BUT GRAVE."**

**I'VE BEEN RUSHING ALL DAY, AS IF IT MADE A** difference whether I arrived at the end of my life an hour sooner. What's the rush? I couldn't miss that deadline if I tried.

**BUSYNESS IS A STATE OF MIND. I DON'T FEEL BUSY** *because* I have ten things to do today. I feel busy because, even as I finish one thing, I worry about the other nine. Do I worry about having to breathe in and out all day? No, I just take one breath at a time.

**GOD DOESN'T BLAME ME FOR LAUGHING WHEN I** should have been crying; for wanting to kiss the girl and live forever; for hoping I could find happiness by some well-traveled

route. God doesn't blame me for not knowing what God knows.

**I WENT TO AN ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATION YES-**terday. Too many leftists sound as if they've audited courses at the Rush Limbaugh School of Oversimplification. Hatred is hatred. A leftist demonizing the President is no different than Bush inveighing against "the evil ones." But I'm glad I went, just as I'm glad to be sitting here peacefully this morning with my cat in my lap. Of course, if a mouse suddenly darted across the floor, how abruptly this peaceful moment would end. Could I do anything to keep my cat from pouncing? Would it make a difference if a hundred thousand mice had demonstrated yesterday, chanting, *No more claws*?

**AGAIN, WE OWN THE SKY. AGAIN, OUR BOMBS** whistle through the air, which offers a little resistance, but not much.

**IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE AFTERNOON, AND I'M** tired. My country is dropping two-thousand-pound bombs halfway around the world, and all I want to do is lie down and sleep.

**I DREAMT THAT IT WAS ALL A DREAM. GEORGE** W. Bush isn't really president. John Ashcroft didn't wiretap my phone last week. The World Trade Center didn't collapse because some religious fanatics wanted to make a point and couldn't get their own talk show.

**WILLIAM STAFFORD: "IT IS IMPORTANT THAT AWAKE** people be awake. . . . The signals we give — yes or no, or maybe — should be clear: the darkness around us is deep."

**AFTER WE DIE, DO WE PONDER OUR LIVES AS IF** they were dreams from which we've just awakened? Or do we forget them as quickly as we once forgot our dreams?

**THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PER-**sons is a powerful lobby. Most people don't know, however, that anyone over the age of fifty can join: you don't have to be retired, just breathing. With so many members of my generation swelling the organization's ranks, I'd like to see us stir up a little trouble: shift the focus from protecting Social Security to planting subversive ideas in the minds of the young; change its name to the American Association of Dangerous Old People. We are, after all, the generation that tried to change the world. We got it confused with sex and drugs and rock-and-roll. But we're a little wiser now. And still breathing.