

Postcards from Earth:  
Biographies of Stars  
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It probably started with little thought to outcome. It simply started. It started with just a seed; a set of preliminary instructions; and time. Lots of time...

Basic blueprints made early models. But with later models, modifications were needed. The creations, themselves, had imposed their own rules and limitations on the very things that were used to make them. In all constructions, beginnings appear parallel; it is the endings that reveal distinctions. How one faces inevitability is what exposes the soul.

The small live quietly, modestly, working hard for little gain – not much to show for ardor endured minute-to-minute, eon-to-eon – but no complaints. Those of this ilk don't take from others. They impose themselves on no one. And tend to conduct their business without fanfare. They make use of what they've been given, cultivating crop from provided seed. Unpretentious these quiet folks are. The little guy speaks out seldom and finds fulfillment in doing what destiny has assigned. One day is much like the next; yet, with each day, the work is done. News of it to others is mum. Few stresses are unmanageable; few that cannot be countered and readily assimilated. Not much ruffles the life of the calm. If there is suffering, it is hidden from outside view. Life is lived until all that is given is spent. Then death comes. These unassuming souls exit in mystery. No acquaintance or onlooker is made privy to the fruits of their existence. These outwardly tranquil souls just seem to fade away. Their light slowly dims. Locked within, perhaps forever, are the unpretentious traces of a life that once was, a rather uncelebrated one; and while it lasted, a good one. What these hard-workers produce during their lifetimes is not remarkable in any way; yet what they produce is fundamental. Post death, it is sequestered; at least that is what is assumed. For this seemingly ordinary existence, its purpose may not have been evident. And maybe its purpose is yet to come. But purpose was not for the being to decide; the mission was to work with what was given, maximizing its potential: A life spent taking nothing that was not offered; giving back what was possible; and accepting opportunity as it was availed.

There are others that live large. They die before they age, and their deaths, much like their lives, are filled with rage, tumult, and torment. They seem to thrive in such unquiet environs. They like the stage, the pomp, the show. Celebrity is their calling. Those who live large dominate with ease; their commanding presence seizes the limelight. But they *deserve* the spotlight; as they give more than they receive. They produce prodigiously in minimal time – exuding a greatness born from something not seen. Behind this audacity, they hold a secret: For them, to live each day is to struggle. It is the struggle that fuels their effortless grandeur. Within their cores, stresses build. Internal demand for output increases. Stresses escalate. These giants are at the top of their game. No equal in productivity exists. These champs are unparalleled. But life lived to the fullest faces unexpected darkness. For them, all too soon, their fortune reverses. The heart of the giant begins to implode; and seemingly, as if to compensate, the mammoth's external presence expands convulsively, its aura overwhelming all within proximity. A brilliant glow masks

its self-engineered doom. With each heave and each gasp, the formidable titan continues to produce; its strategies for implementation modify with rapidity to combat changing conditions; and output is increasingly complex and prolific. Nothing stops its drive to create. These high achievers, always unmatched in life, are beyond all expectations as they cascade toward death. And as life slips away, never a thought do they give to the consequence of their loose expressions on others. For these imposing beings, it is all about them as they alternately resist and succumb to the inexorable. Elation counters devastation counters elation; back and forth, volatility the backdrop. The only constants are the turmoil and the sprinting pace within, as they are compelled onward by their unstoppable one-man race to demise. Ultimately, they meet their end; and that end is violent and explosive - verging on the spectacular. Unforgettable they were in life; a legend, they are, in death. Vestiges of their fortunes and misfortunes linger for all eternity, to be cycled and recycled through all that is and all that will be. These shattered icons become the celebrated victims of their endowment-imposed tragedies; and their legacy – their scattered remains – becomes nourishment for future incarnations.

Most lives fall in between these extremes of anonymity and preeminence. They populate the spectrum of average. And as with averages, some are more noticeable than others; but mostly they are similar. All alternately are plagued and blessed with intervals of duress and sameness. Drama interrupts calm. Desire is for the latter; although directed and gainful action tends to come from the former, as greatness seems only to come from struggle. Theatrics - a craving to be noticed - signal decline. Youth is past; a limit now in view. Productivity escalates – motivated by the potential of irrelevance. The invigorated call-to-action is a cry of despair. There is no turning back to younger days. Amplified activity distracts from reality, but the fading star fails to understand: Death's ghost is squeezing from its future victim its final potential. On this one-way march to the end, those in this group go through fits. They throw “shedding tantrums”, where they puff and spew their mass. None in their wake escape their purge. These ranting moguls refuse to shrink into insignificance. Rage may be swift, yet final; or it may be protracted, with repeated pulses of fury interrupted by fleeting episodes of calm. The larger they are, the more fiercely they resist the end; the more protracted their good-bye. Eventually, the rage does subside. All energy is spent. All that can be spewed outward is gone. The core, alone, survives; relics of a lifetime remain interred within: A legacy confined, at least for now.

Sometimes the “shedding tantrums” of an average star's death-march rile a dormant companion, stirring it back to life, taunting it into seething vigor, rudely extricating it from its apparent eternal repose. In this way, the surrendering soul of a dying cohort can exhume gifts of its slumbering comrade. But the rekindled may have chosen continued sleep, as the return from stillness is not without pain. The final curtain falls quickly and with violent certitude. Creations of a lifetime – symbols of life's trials and efforts - are released from the revived and scattered throughout the universe - new seed for eventual constructions. Rebirth of the neighbor's previously inert core revises the fate of its locked-away treasures; its renaissance re-scripts the pathway for those whose lives follow; its brief comeback promotes evolution of the whole.

For those who follow along life's chronology, they can survive only on what has been passed down before. Without suffering of those before, there is no growth for those after. This is life everlasting. Death is just its pause. It is here that the bridge is reached, the bridge along which the torch is passed between "what has been" and "what will be *because* of what has been". And the victories of those departed lay the groundwork for all that come after. Each life cycled to completion is but a single step along the composite journey.