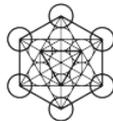


# THE END, BY ANNA

ADAM ZACHARY



Metatron  
Montreal

My artwork 'The End' will require:

1. a healthy human body (my own)—no more than twenty-five years old
2. a small plane (2b., an experienced bush pilot)
3. [various electronics; details below]

I will be flown to a remote stretch of tundra. I will bring no clothes, food, water, tools, other supplies, or devices capable of receiving communication. I will bring nothing but a video camera equipped with a night-vision filter and tripod, a battery large enough to allow the camera to film continuously for over a week, and a high-quality satellite uplink to enable the best real-time transmission possible. Upon arrival, I will set up the camera and, for my reference, mark the ground so I do not stray from the camera's field of vision. I will then set up the

uplink and begin to transmit video. (No sound.) Video screens in selected galleries, coffee shops, storefronts, etc. around the world will switch on at this moment, as well as a video player on my website. Without shame for my nudity and without giving a visible impression that anything is wrong, I will look into the camera. I will ignore the camera after this one look. Then, without leaving the marked area, I will walk in circles, lie down, sleep, urinate and defecate, forage on my narrow patch of land, and try to catch rain in my mouth to survive. If I become frustrated, I will scream and the video will show my straining mouth. If I become sad, I will cry and my sobs will look like convulsions in the silence. This will continue until I become too weak to do anything. At that point, I will lie on the ground and wait for death, however long it takes to come. I will

wait there quietly until I die of thirst or cold or sadness. After I am dead, the camera will continue to film as my body begins to decompose and/or is consumed by wildlife. Until the batteries run out. Then the piece will be over.

Anna [xxxx]

December 8, 2014

[xxxxxxxxx] Avenue, Toronto

I have adapted the previous section from Anna's notes.

I hope to honour her memory by inspiring a reader to perform 'The End', her sole unrealized work and the one she considered her greatest. (At age 22, instead of dying as she'd planned, Anna fell from the balcony of her thirtieth-floor apartment. She was quiet on the way down, but made a loud noise with her legs and back when she landed on an eighth-floor terrace. Do I idealize her too much when I wonder: Anna, why did you not cry out? A last word, an epitaph, an epithet, a primal yell? Many would have heard you, however you decided to use that final breath. It was a fine day, everyone was out.) Will it be you? I have written the following abridged biography, including a few notes on her work, for your benefit: first, so that you may

begin to know Anna as I knew her, and second, so that maybe you will understand what she wished to accomplish with 'The End', maybe hold it in mind as you shiver on some forsaken permafrost and wait for death.

Like many great artists, Anna was discouraged from becoming one. This discouragement was not explicit; ‘artist’ was simply not a thing she’d been provided a chance to imagine being. Her family was not creative and did not consider art to be a worthwhile pastime, let alone a viable career path. She went to a good school, but her artistic education there was lacking: years of pushing gouache around after lunch, slide lectures that lingered on the Renaissance and only brought her up to pre-war expressionism—far short of anything she might have found interesting. So, trusting the implicit message that surrounded her, she did not waste time on experiencing or making art. Instead, until she learned better, she tried to be a poet.

Poetry had been presented to Anna by teachers in the usual romanticized way in which it is presented by non-poets. She was attracted to that

popular characterization of poetry as inaccessible, too 'deep' for anyone to fully understand. Her own poems were mediocre, but she was praised for just being a teenager who bothered to write them. "Our resident poet," her principal called her. Then she went on to university and became a lot less special overnight. Surrounded by other young writers, she became self-aware of her work's mediocrity and took on as nemesis a threefold hatred: first, *for* all those other writers; second, for nearly everything she had written thus far; and third, for the constraints of poetry as a primarily language-based medium. She had begun to dream in other forms. It did not take her long to realize that she hated most of her work because of the boundaries she had perceived a need to create within; to realize that she had much to express which she could not in that medium, so she was wasting her time as

a poet. This occurred in our second year at university. Anna was enrolled in a writing seminar in which students were assigned to bring new poems every week. Her professor was a noted formalist who instructed his students to think of writing a poem like building a house: laying a frame of its core objective, painting the walls with images, and so on. Anna called me after class to say it was the most inane thing she had ever heard. “A poem should burn a house down,” she said. I said fine, burn a house down, see how it goes. I hadn’t meant it literally, but a few Saturdays later, she pulled up in her parents’ car with a can of gasoline.

We drove an hour west to a decrepit cottage on overgrown land that she remembered having seen on a road trip. It was early winter. The field was quiet as we kicked in the door and soaked the walls with fuel, pretending it was champagne and

we were at a club. We met back in the front hall and hugged. She was shaking, laughing uncontrollably. We laughed until I checked her bag and noticed what she'd forgotten, then we left for the nearby town to buy a carton of *Strike Anywhere!* matches and wait in a parking lot, where we ate Timbits and set napkins on fire until the sun got low. Then drove back. Anna ran up to the house, lit what matches remained, and threw the burning box in through a broken window. She took out her phone and filmed as fire spread through the house. It was built atop a hill and the sun was setting opposite its door from where we stood, lending the day's last light to her scene. The clouds were tall and dark as the smoke. We stood for five minutes, hands cold, not speaking so as not to disturb the film. We might have stayed longer, but we heard sirens on the wind. To end the film,