

Becoming A father went a long way toward prompting me to barter some of my precious freedom for responsibility.

Page 4 – A Brush With Death –and Life

It reminded me of something that I keep forgetting: Life is not a given, but a priceless gift. One day something will steal it from us, a seizure in the night or a driver in the morning, but that doesn't diminish its value. On the contrary, fragility and impermanence ensure life's preciousness. We can truly love only that which one day we must lose. It took a trapdoor trembling beneath my feet, and a crazed woman casting the shadow of death across my family's path, to awaken me once again to the wonder of life and the blessing of love.

Page 26 – The Richest Man in the World

So I had it wrong when I was a little boy. But only partly wrong, for in the only way it matters, my grandfather far surpassed her in riches. After all, he knew that our true wealth is measured not by what we leave behind but by what we can afford to give before we go.

Page 47 – The Price of Self-Pity

As it turns out, when one is feeling rotten, helpful hints aren't always helpful. I didn't want advice. I wanted pity. Innocent suggestions, from "Why don't you take a shower? You'll feel better" to "Look through the Yellow Pages and call one of those places that rents laptop computers," compounded my pain. Any intimation that I actually might do something to lift myself out of the doldrums seemed cruel, as did the whole, grim business were my own fault.

What I learned during my week of convalescence is something that I keep forgetting. Self-pity defeats its own object. It is almost impossible to feel sorry for a person who is feeling sorry for himself. There is a simple explanation for this. When we are full of ourselves – whether with pity, fear, anger, ambition, or anything else – little room remains for anyone else to enter our lives. No one wishes to be the means to another's end. But when we make a play for pity,, we insist upon just that. This leads directly to resentment, which compounds our self-pity and raises walls of estrangement between us and our loved ones.