

# *Nicotine Kool-Aid*

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*Long as I remember the rain been comin' down  
Clouds of mystery pourin' confusion on the ground  
Good men through the ages tryin' to find the sun  
And I wonder, still I wonder, who'll stop the rain?*

*Dedicated to my Grandpa...and a free Venezuela!*

## Letter 1

June 12,

*Well, the valley really got clobbered; I hardly know where to begin. It was all due to the cold, late spring and the late snows in the mountains. On top of that—then came the rain! Yeah, the government has been “playing God” conducting climate control experiments, seeding the clouds. Reminds me of when they “seeded” the lakes with mysis shrimp to boost the kokanee population and it backfired—no more salmon for the eagles, bears, or me! Anyway, it was Monday when the river started to come up. Man, did it ever go wild! Al, Caleb, Dan, and I went down to the river and put up a dike, thinking, if it would hit its crest by morning, we’d be able to hold it. (Had we only known what was in store for us!) About 4 a.m., we knew it was a lost cause. A few minutes later, it broke about 50 yards below us—sounded like a freight train. We decided to get out of there while we still could.*

*When I got home I checked the cellar; no water. But I disconnected the juice “just in case.” Then I went to bed for a few hours; even then I wasn’t too worried, thinking it would hit its peak by morning. When I awoke the next morning and looked out, did I ever get a surprise—just one big lake! I carried what I could upstairs, threw a few things to take in a cardboard box, grabbed Bosco, and left in a hurry. The water was already over the hubcaps and the current was really strong. Glad I don’t have an electric car. Could’ve got quite a charge out of it! You’d have to see it to know what it was like...everything happened so fast. They had copters, planes, and drones in the air. It all just seemed like a bad dream.*

*I drove to the institute. When I’m working on a project, sometimes Bosco and I stay over. I keep a change of clothes and some things there, so it wasn’t too bad. My “home away from home.” I went back that night to check on the place. I had a rubber boat and my waders on. The only way I could tell where the road was, was by the mailboxes and trees. Of course, Bosco was with me. We were able to get to the house. The water was just over the back steps, but not into the house. Everything else was under water—everything! And four deer were on a little island across the road. I hope they made it out OK. Lots of horses, cattle, and pigs were drowned and floating down the river, not to mention all the robots. Didn’t know a robot could float. This is going to be an awful mess to clean up.*

June 18,

*They cut a channel in the road so the water could drain back to the river; it was like a torrent! So I have my home back—the lights, power, and internet are on again. I took the pump apart today: took the motor off, drained the water, cleaned it all up, and then put it*

*in the oven and baked it awhile. When I put it back together it worked just fine. Won't be able to use the water for drinking for some time, but, other than that, everything's okay.*

*The other morning, a bunch of us were out on the road, and they were telling about the things that had happened, and what they had seen. Knowing me, you can guess I had one to tell too. I know they didn't believe it, and I'm sure you won't either, but I'll tell it to you anyway. I was near the bridge when I saw two chickens riding on a barrel. The water was so high that the barrel would just barely pass under the bridge. So when the barrel got to the bridge, the chickens jumped on the bridge, ran across to the other side, and when the barrel came out, they jumped back on again and rode it on down the river. Left me scratchin' my head. I guess they didn't know about the waterfall up ahead. The boys said it was a good story. They dubbed the chickens Putin and Zelensky. Farewell, my dear friend. I'll write more later. May Heaven shower blessings upon you. Always, D.*

## **Letter 2**

*July 1,*

*I know you were planning on visiting, but, unless you want the horrible typhoid shots, I'd wait awhile. And talking about pain, I have a story, one that's almost too painful to tell. Anyway, I was going through town the other day, I like to ride my bike to the lake on my days off. There was a crowd gathered, protesting. I stopped to ask the policeman what it was about. He said they were protesting Christmas! Can you believe it?! I listened for awhile. There was an older, bearded fellow speaking, very articulate, expounding his points. But there didn't seem to be anyone speaking up for God. So I thought, "Well, what the heck! Somebody's gotta do it." I stepped out by him to wait my turn. The old guy looked at me very respectfully, and shifted the direction of his speech, saying, "This fellow here will probably tell you such and such, and so and so." He proceeded to explain all my counterpoints very clearly. I don't think he wanted to give up the "floor"; he was enjoying the moment. And he said it all so well; I was having trouble thinking of what I might add. When he "stepped off his soapbox" and gestured for me to speak—as I opened my mouth—WHAM! I was on the ground and I could see a pool of blood forming. I realized someone had hit me with a brick! Funny thing, all I felt was relief. I'd made my point without even having to speak! Talk about turning the other cheek. Ha ha. I'm happy to tell you I wasn't hurt too bad. So much for my political aspirations. Remember me with affection, should you never hear from me again. Ha ha. Anyway, I look forward to your letter.*

*Affectionately, D.*

### Letter 3

January 1,

Can't tell you how much I enjoyed your visit—walking through the quiet nights with the street lights and the gently falling snow. Like Bosco, the cold isn't excessive if you're wrapped up in fur. Anyway, such a strange occurrence has happened that I had to write to you. I've been putting in more hours at the lab. I know how you feel about my work and can only imagine how you picture it (like something out of Arrowsmith):

*In an old castle converted into a laboratory, late at night, the cone of light casts an eerie glow on rows of test tubes, the bright brass of the microscopes. Dipping his hands in the bichloride solution, the scientist gives them a quick shake and picks up the hypodermic needle from the instrument bath. For a moment, an errant thought runs through his mind: protoplasm, a nucleus, a chain of chromosomes...how does a cell become enslaved to a form, to a destiny it can never change? Can we change that destiny? Should we? Pushing away the thoughts, he returns to the work at hand. As his hunchback assistant, Igor, holds down and restrains the squirming Demo-rat, he pinches up the skin of the soft underbelly and punctures it with a quick down thrust!*

*The rat gives a little jerk, a squeal, and a squeak!*

LOL. "The Jab in the Lab?" And by injecting the beady-eyed Demo-rat with a MAGA-dose of common sense, he saves the day! Ah, "The Truth Solution—No More Lies?" If it were only that easy to restore truth, justice, and freedom to the land! If only we had a balm of peace instead of all these bombs of war!

So much for my fantasy. Back to reality. I've been working on enhancing NADH.

The textbook definition: "Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide is a vital coenzyme found in all living cells that plays a central role in cellular metabolism and energy production."

Anyway, I thought maybe if I could improve upon it, we could improve everyone's quality of life and health. Heal everybody at the most basic level.

I know. We've had the discussion a million times. Daring to alter the perfect imperfection of God's creation? Thinking science can improve upon man? Where do you draw the line? You're right, of course. In the quest for scientific knowledge, there's always the risk of overreaching with unintended consequences. Yeah (as so painfully evidenced by the disappeared kokanee, Covid, and last summer's flood), the effort to "improve" human existence can also result in tragedy. But alas! Like Eve's bite of the forbidden fruit, Prometheus playing with fire, or Icarus—waxing his wings and dreaming of the heights—I didn't heed the warnings!

January 3,

*Firmly resolved to turn my theory into reality, I applied the age-old line of reasoning: Natural philosophy becomes technique, and technique becomes truth. (I think, therefore I can? Ha ha.) Anyway, after days and nights of extensive labor, and exhaustive trial and error, I succeeded...well, I believed I had, anyway. I thought I'd hit the jackpot!*

*“Just by chance he crossed a diamond with a pearl?” Imagine the prospect—the thrill—of creating something that reduced wrinkles and inflammation, improved cognitive function, regulated blood and sugar levels, protected against neurodegenerative diseases, supported energy production, and repaired DNA?*

*I tried to control my initial delight and rapture! Calming myself, I followed protocol, performed all the requisite tests. And the best part? I didn't even have to inject the guineas. I developed a tasty liquid I could put in their food and drink—they lapped it up! Ah, if you could only have seen their sparkling eyes and shiny coats; the little guys were so happy and had so much energy, I almost envied them. That's when I went too far. They were doing so well, I did the unthinkable—I tried it myself!*

*I know, I know. The first rule of the research pathologist: never lick the spoon! But when I took it, the effects weren't dramatic. They were subtle, nuanced: I had more energy in the afternoons, some wild dreams, and creative inspiration at 3 am. All in all, sort of a new kind of high. I felt like a million. That's when I had my first misgivings. My second experiment? I stopped taking it. Result: Nausea, headache, dizziness, my blood pressure went wonky...withdrawals? Yeah, when the creature opened its pale yellow eyes, and looked in the mirror...then came the realization: I'd created a monster—a new drug!*

*Man, all that work for nothing? I was devastated. Just to be certain, I separated the guineas into new experimental and control groups, taking half the guineas off the “juice.” Sure enough, they became ornery as all get-out, grouchy as grizzly bears coming out of hibernation. That was all the proof I needed.*

*Wow! President Trump has been doing his best to eliminate the scourge of illegal drugs... and here I was creating a new one! I did a thorough analysis. A better vitamin B ? No. The closest I could determine, at best, I had a form of liquid nicotine. At worst? I'd created a Frankenstein nicotinamide on steroids! IT'S ALIVE!?! Honestly, I didn't know what I was dealing with. All I could think of was how many lives this thing could destroy! I had to put the kibosh on this—destroy it completely! Imagine if it fell into the wrong hands, the devastation if some unscrupulous Big Pharma company got ahold of it!*

*I'm probably being a little overdramatic, but...the age-old ethical quandary: the betterment of mankind versus making a bundle? The Devil was whispering in my ear. This could be a golden treasure box that'd spill out infinite wealth...forever! Mixed with some vitamins and a smidge of collagen, my Frankenstein nicotinamide could be marketed as a panacea: a beauty, health, cure-all, energy drink. Even if you weren't better, you'd feel like you were. Accessible to everyone everywhere, even the White House? Drug the whole world? Everyone hooked, locked down in the "strong cell" of addiction, and none the wiser? It'd be perfect for athletes, too. Since nicotine is naturally occurring, it wouldn't even be noted in a drug test! Ah, the delectable undetectable: the new designer drug—**NICOTINE KOOL-AID!***

*Yes, "success" may have crowned my endeavors...but all for naught!*

*Needless to say, (though I kept a copy of my work) I destroyed the drug completely!*

*Yeah, you win some you lose some. But time to take Bosco for his walk. Bye for now.*

*Affectionately, D.*

*P.S. Just heard the good news: They captured Maduro! Your prayers have been answered! Hooray! Hooray! Freedom day! A day we'll always remember. Three cheers for Trump! I'm gonna mark this down on my calendar! You can finally return home!*

**And now...all she wrote.**

*My dearest D.,*

*I had such a good time with you and Bosco. I did a little sketch. Forgive the artistic license. Couldn't resist! A little memento of our visit. But you're right. Since I heard about Maduro's capture, I've been on cloud nine!*



*I should be able to go home now. I spent years working on my house. Call it a labor of love. It used to look so nice, so picturesque—the beautiful gate, lawn, the long drive, the white walls with their edges softened by the greenery. I would've been content to stay forever, but reluctantly, I left. My friend sent me a picture of it the other day...heartbreaking. My little piece of paradise was virtually unrecognizable: completely overgrown, slowly being devoured by a jungle of vegetation and submerged under a mountain of trash people had dumped into the yard...the gate thrown wide open! I'm looking forward to cleaning it up—rebuilding and restoring. Maybe you can help.*

*I've been looking forward to getting out of New York anyway. Imagine, the new mayor being sworn in on the Quran at midnight, in the bowels of the earth, in an abandoned subway station? Doesn't bode well. New York's darkest hour? One word: Mamdani! Mamdani wants to do to New York what Maduro did to Venezuela!*

*Thank goodness "Bomb Donny" is on the job, saving the world peace-by-peace! Trump sure has his work cut out for him, doesn't he? Bringing an end to eight wars, "peace" in the Middle East, and now freeing Venezuela! Chalk up another one for the Trumpster! They wouldn't give him a Nobel Prize, but something should be done to honor all Trump's glorious victories in the battle for freedom and peace. Maybe a "big, beautiful," MAGA-sized Arch of Triumph! (Or with a French accent: Arc de Trump, mais oui! Napoleon, eat your heart out.) But they'd better do it quick. Pretty soon they won't be able to fit all his triumphs on it!*

*Amazing what one person with vision can do.*

*The "Don-roe Doctrine"? The Yanks are coming? Ha ha.*

*The Trump road? Paving the way from a peaceful transition to a glorious future!*

*I'm hoping soon, with Edmundo and Maria restored as president and vice president (may God bless and keep them safe), I can have my beloved Venezuela back again!*

*Walking the city streets free of fear? Can't wait!*

*But I must finish. Hoping to see you soon.*

*Yours always, Angelina*

*I still can't quite believe it! It's finally here: the day justice triumphs over tyranny!*

*Three cheers for Maria and Trump! They're dancing in the streets in Caracas and Miami!*

*Ooh! They're playing my song on the radio! Think I'll join the party! If only I could make my words dance!*

***My muñequita, my Spanish Harlem Mona Lisa***

***You're my reason for reason***

***The step in my groove***

***Because you're so smooth***

***And the rains descended, and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon the house; and it fell not for it was founded on the rock.***

## ***Epilogue: Echoes of “Grace”***

***BABYLON HAS FALLEN! The world has changed, forever!***

*178 years of disastrous economic and political theory!*

*China, Venezuela, Cuba are proof communism and socialism are failed experiments.*

*When have they ever been any good for anyone?*

*Mao, Marx, Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin, Franco, Castro, Maduro, Xi...and now, Mamdani?*

*Rules for Radicals? I can still hear the words from Mamdani’s speech:*

***“We will replace the frigidty of rugged individualism with the warmth of collectivism!”***

*Yikes! Line up to the left to hand in your freedom and democracy?*

*Collectivism? Gives me the willies! Supremacy of state?*

*State control over resources and economy? Individual interests and desires submitted to the needs of the state? Collective control over everyone’s thoughts, actions, and activities? Individual rights and freedoms limited to what is deemed essential for the collective good?*

*The Mayflower, the pioneers, baseball, hotdogs, Mom, apple pie, and the American way?*

*“Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above...Don’t fence me in!”*

*This country was built upon personal freedom, achievement, courage, and self-reliance!*

*So, rugged individualism versus the suffocating control of the Mamdani collective?*

*I have to be honest: My heroes have always been cowboys.*

***“A tall man in a land of tall men?” Give me John Wayne every time!***

