

## Those Golden Plains

*Alexander Nuccio*

THE SINGER WAILS “*Why—*” as the band keeps the beat, “*is it so hard to make it in America?*” Mesmerising lights set the stage ablaze, highlighting his impassioned sixty-five year old face with his homemade red jumpsuit and neat low afro. The smell of marijuana hangs in the air. Grand old trees, enchanting lanterns, and twinkling fairy lights lie in this (super)natural amphitheatre. Drunken revellers surround me and we’re wading through a sea of beer cans underfoot. I’m grooving alongside my girlfriend but inside I am a clutter of emotion. Life is hard; I guess it affects me moreover because I know of Charles Bradley’s heartbreaking past. It’s hard to validate yourself throughout this life of ours.

I gaze up towards the sky and reflect upon the beautiful mess of stars and planets, commonly known as the Milky Way. I muse back to six months prior when I found myself in the exact same spot, living through the same emotions (that time, deeply stirred by a jovial Nile Rodgers and catalysed by drugs). Hugs have enveloped me during both of these strangely moving times. A girlfriend, a brother, and close friends remind me how far I’ve come—from an immensely fulfilling childhood and early life to the dark days pondering death only a few years ago—and also how far I have to go. I reminisce about the days spent playing with friends and chasing girls during my early youth, compared to the endless hours spent finding solace in my journal, and the tears, as a young man entering adulthood. Those dark days that troubled me so are behind me now.

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I imagine the majority of people in the world have had a period of time in their lives which was very joyous and magical, and mine was when I was growing up. I first kissed a girl when I was about four years old, in kindergarten. She had a coarse voice, full lips, and buoyant hair. At age five I met a girl who would go on to be my childhood sweetheart. She wore her hair in pigtails. Rich brown eyes. Tanned skin highlighted by the bright patterns that she wore, courtesy of the 90s. Riding bikes and running around naked. Unbeknownst to me, I wouldn't have a friend like her for another ten years. In my dark days I was convinced that my childhood was the happiest time I would ever have. Now standing here amongst my raft of intimate friends, still locked in a tangle of embraces with emotion cascading throughout, I can see that it was a close second.

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I was having a ball throughout high school until I was hit with glandular fever. In my first year of VCE I struggled with the workload and the teachers were the first to pick up on my lethargy. The usually bubbly and loud personality that I possessed had altered drastically. My whole life had hit a titanic iceberg. Unnerving thoughts crept into my head:

*Who is Alexander Nuccio?*

*Why does he exist?*

*Would anyone really care if he died?*

These were the first three sentences of my first ever journal entry.

Although I never actually attempted to end my life, looking back, I fear I was close. The majority of my mornings during those years (that I can recall) was spent in my lonely, solemn bedroom. Many long nights spent awake, contemplating, writing, and crying. Falling asleep at seven in the morning, and waking up at three in the afternoon was the norm.

I reluctantly finished my schooling and promptly dropped out of university after just three months. It was only after I spontaneously decided to travel Europe solo for half a year that this vicious cycle finally came to an end, and upon my arrival home I was revitalised. With my new outlook on the world, I sought out new adventures, and that's when I first visited these golden plains. Bright faces with humble dreams.

## Alexander Nuccio

So as I dance here in this revered spot, the familiar feeling of wild freedom and wonderment that I am experiencing can only be compared to those unbridled early childhood years and my six month sojourn as an intrepid traveller. The tented town. The intimidating Ferris Wheel. Every time I step onto these sacred grounds and fight with my tent, I gaze into my past with open eyes and appreciate how good it feels to be alive. All the stress and worry of my city world disappears. I resolve to simply enjoy the weekend here.

Charles leaves the stage to raptures from the crowd and I await the next act so that I can keep on dancing into oblivion. The amphitheatre fills with darkness; introspection consumes me once more. I am reminded of the last sentence from my journal during the dark days and it occurs to me that those words were almost like a premonition of my existence today:

*“Every thought that once was, never is [now].”*