

Letter to Mack

by [T. E. Creus](#) (July 2021)



Cabin Essence, Peter Doig, 1993-94

October 26, 2031

Dear Mack,

I hope this letter finds you well. I know we have our differences, but they are more recent and perhaps not as deep as everybody thinks. We grew up together, remember? We were good friends once. I know where you're coming from. And so, I was hoping that perhaps you could understand me a bit too.

I am not one of those that you call "disease deniers," or "vaccine deniers," or whatever is the term used now. I've

been there, on the other side. I know how it feels. The despair of knowing that someone close to you is sick with a contagious illness, and not being able to do anything about it, perhaps not even to visit. To gasp every time you hear an ambulance's siren. To worry that you'll be the next one. Oh, I've been through all that. I know how bad it feels.

But what has been happening in the last ten or so years is something else. See, I remember—way back when in 2020—when the first of those new diseases came out, I saw an interview with one of those pop intellectuals who was in fashion at the time, and he said “the next step in technology is to go under our skin.” To his credit, he didn't say it as a positive thing, or with an evil smile and rubbing his hands—he just stated it matter-of-factly as something inevitable. And I knew, even then, that he was right. We would have microchips in our brains, and genetically modified cells in our body, and nano-bots navigating out bloodstream, and—you name it. Whatever you could imagine, they could probably do it. And most people would go along with it. And perhaps it would really solve some problems, or help avoid future pandemics, or lead to a better, healthier life for most. Perhaps.

But it just wasn't the right world for me.

I mean, even back then, I understood, at least partially, the reasons for all that, but it just didn't feel right to live in constant paranoia and fear of going out, or meeting anyone, and washing your hands every time you touch a doorknob, and seeing everybody everywhere wearing a mask, and—oh, it just didn't feel like a real life. And then the constant tests, the “vaccine passports” to go anywhere and all that paraphernalia of control. I repeat, even if there were supposedly logical reasons, once Frankenstein's creature escapes his creator, all bets are off; and I knew even then that it was just the beginning, that technology and control would become ever more present and more constricting, encircling us until we had no way to escape.

So, as soon as I could, I bolted out. Moved to a little place in the countryside, lived like a hermit for several years, practicing subsistence farming and basically disconnecting from the rest of the world. I even had a generator so I did not need to depend on the electrical grid if things came to that. And, slowly, other people started to come too. We were poor, but we were mostly free. I knew that there would be attempts to control us or check on us, and there wouldn't be much we could do about it. Spy drones, perhaps we could shoot them out of the sky with a gunshot, or even a slingshot, but what could we do against satellites? Or against "smart dust", or genetically modified bugs, or whichever else they would come up with?

Surprisingly, they left us in peace. I guess we just were too poor and unimportant to influence anyone. But I knew that it was just temporary. We could not live forever like that. Sooner or later, they would come for us. I totally expected that.

What I did not expect, Mack, was that you would be the one to come for us. You, of all people, whom I knew since we were three years old.

Remember when we caught a frog in the pond near our neighbourhood? You wanted to take it home as a pet, I wanted to leave it be in the wild. You won, you took it home, put it in a glass jar, and it died after a few weeks. I guess you didn't know how to feed it or care for it properly, or it just wasn't the right environment for it.

We parted ways after college. I studied Literature, perhaps not the wisest decision, and I knew that you went into Law, then into some kind of government job. We still met and talked in those days, even if not so often. I was teaching, you were working at the mayor's office. Then I heard that you met some people with good political connections, and started to rise fast. FBI, CIA, I don't really know, but you were the

tops. Now you're the director of this new organization, which I don't know how it's called, but which basically hunts us poor techno-medical-police-state outcasts.

Well, we knew that we had a mole here in our group. This guy who said he came from who knows where in Ohio but had a New York accent, said he was a farmer, but couldn't make even beans grow. Said he wanted out of the system for religious reasons, but couldn't differentiate Jesus from Judas and did not seem the religious type to me. We let him be, but we had our suspicions and didn't necessarily make things easy for him, so eventually he left. Perhaps he already had gathered all the information he needed, who knows. What's clear is that soon after that, we seem to have come into your radar, Mack. And now you're coming for us.

When you and your fellow officers arrive here, you will find this letter, but you won't find me, because I will be dead, having shot myself in the heart.

...

Ha! Just kidding.

What do you think I am, a frog you can put into a jar?

Actually, if you carefully look around, you will notice that there's not much left in the place. Except fertilizer. Tons of fertilizer. The explosive kind, you know. The whole place is now laced with explosives, and they are timed to go out with a big bang at a certain scheduled time. I would advise you and your team not to stay much longer.

We moved somewhere else, long ago. Somewhere safer. How did we know you were coming? Well, you had your mole in our organization but, what you don't know, is that we also had a mole in yours. Ha, isn't it funny? We knew, we know, all your moves. We played chess when we were children, remember? I always lost. But since then, I've learned a few more tricks.

So, sorry if I can't tell you details about our infiltrator. And sorry if we can't stay here to receive you with smiles and champagne bottles.

Well... Actually... If you go down to the cellar, there might be some champagne bottles left . . . We couldn't carry everything with us . . . Feel free to open them. Then again, there are also those explosives . . . I don't know . . . Well, it's up to you.

See you next time, Mack.

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