

The birds are back. I can feel them. Hunter S. had bats. I have birds.

Their flapping wings dragged me out of sleep this morning. I can feel them beating against the inside of my ribcage. I can keep my eyes closed, but I know that I am awake now and will not be able to ignore them and slip back under the tide of sleep. They are here and they won't leave me alone.

Everyone has experienced the abject panic of a bird trapped inside a room – hurling its soft feathered body against glass in a futile attempt to regain the freedom of blue sky. Downy feathers floating through disrupted currents of air. You can almost see how fast its heart is beating as its terror mounts. Confusion, mute pleading... please let me out. Your own heart speeds up in tandem with the bird's.

That is what I feel in my chest. I guess there are three of them. I suppose I could name them Anxiety, Fear and Panic. Not very original names I grant you, but they are more than adequate for the moment.

Since there are multiple birds and the space of my chest cavity is quite small, you can imagine the desperate amount of activity as they flap. After a few moments when they come to a trembling and exhausted rest, I imagine I can hear a slight sound – like that of a mourning dove. Soft, plaintive cooing.

Why do they have to wake me up every morning? I can't say that it is the most tranquil way to greet another day. They make me dread waking up. I dread feeling the thud of their little bodies against my ribs – throwing the other residents of that space into discontent. My heart and lungs

forget their normal steady rhythm and instead race, about then plod along, and then back again – lurching the stomach in tow for a queasy ride.

I lay on my back with blankets pulled up to just underneath my stark wide eyes. I am awake now. I am waiting. It seems like I am waiting for something to happen to make the flapping stop. If I am very still will they forget they are trapped and accept their captivity? Will they stop the flapping that makes me feel like I will vomit? Will their little bodies just drop dead from fear and let stillness ebb back into the small room that is my chest?

It feels like every muscle I have is seized with rigor mortis. They ache from the strain of stillness – tight, clenched. Coiled so tightly they are ready to pop. With so much activity going on inside, I guess the rest of me is trying to compensate with determined and steadfast immobility.

I am tired. Exhausted. And all I have done is leave the calm stillness of sleep. Just waking up in the morning, every morning, does this to me.

I would like to be one of those people who wake up and then roll over and go back to sleep. That simply isn't working for me lately. When I wake it is like a switch has been flipped to 'on' – that is all – I have no say in the matter anymore. I am simply ON. Fuck. There really isn't anything I can do about it now. All I can do is get up, brush my teeth, and face the hours I have in front of me. Again.

How to get through the hours that stretch out ahead of me like a long and un-shaded road? How to pretend that the birds are not there? Since there is no cover they will swoop at me. How to face the solitude that I both loathe and gratefully embrace? How to keep my brain from folding in on its self with questions that don't receive answers and answers that aren't pretty enough for acceptance?

I am awake again and there is nothing I can do about it.

I still can't will myself to pull the blankets off my body. I cannot admit that AWAKE is here.

Frozen. Unwilling. A small child that says 'I WON'T.' Period.

I won't accept that this day is here and it is so identical to the day before (and the day before that and the day before that). They are all blending together and I have stopped being able to tell the difference between them. I sort of know the days of the week, but month? YEAR? It has all become a muddle. Memory when there is nothing specific to remember gets a little plastic. When did that happen?

I am not really sure.

Getting out of bed will be admitting defeat. Staying in bed will simply be another form.

Should I stay or should I go now?

I bitterly resent the birds. I would take great pleasure in plucking, stuffing and roasting their small bodies with savory herbs - pulling well browned bits of flesh off their little bones with my teeth - spitting out the occasional lead shot. Yes, that would be a fitting end to their flapping and making me suffer in their stead.

Fucking birds.

ROASTED ANXIETY, FEAR & PANIC

3 small game birds plucked, cleaned and semi boned

6 slices of slab bacon

1 small onion, brunoise

2 cloves garlic, minced

½ cup carrot, brunoise

1 cup sliced wild mushrooms

2 sprigs fresh thyme

1 Tablespoon tomato paste

1 cup small cubed country bread

1 cup chicken stock (or game bird stock if you are ambitious)

Salt and cracked pepper

Render 3 slices of bacon in a cast iron pan. You want to cook the bacon and have a couple of teaspoons of fat left in the bottom of the pan. Remove cooked bacon (eat one slice), chop and reserve.

Sauté onions, garlic and carrots in bacon fat until soft. Remove from pan leaving some bacon fat behind. (add a little olive oil if needed)

Add sliced mushrooms. Sauté, but do not disturb the mushrooms too much. Movement will prevent them from browning. After mushrooms are browned, return onion mixture to the pan. Add sprigs of thyme, tomato paste and salt and pepper to taste. Cook gently until thyme falls off the stems. Remove from heat. Discard stems.

Add cubed bread and chopped cooked bacon to vegetable mixture. Add enough stock to moisten. Taste and re-season with salt and pepper if needed. Cool.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Lay birds out skin side down. Salt and pepper interior and spoon a bird body sized portion of bread and vegetable mixture into the center of the carcass. Fold meat and skin around stuffing tightly so that you now have a neat bundle that resembles the original bird. (You will probably have left over stuffing, but then again, I have no idea how many little birds you have thrashing about in your chest. If you do have leftover stuffing, add one beaten egg and bake in an oven proof dish.)

Nestle birds in a small roasting pan and drape with remaining slices of bacon.

Roast little birds for about ten minutes and then remove bacon. Spoon bacon fat over birds, sprinkle with salt and broil until browned on the outside, still a little pink on the inside.

Savor with a fruity red. Smile at the lack of flapping.

My life has been in a state of suspended animation for the last several years. The exact number I am unsure of, which in itself is a staggering idea. I would like to say it has been a couple of years, as in a few, as in two. Unfortunately that is not the case. My mind and body have been stuck in this limbo of.... blank. Stuck. That is the most eloquent way I have of describing a state of being for which I am lacking the smallest iota of understanding. I know I have been this way for more than two years – definitely more than three. Five? More than five? That is something that I have trouble wrapping my mind around, but if I am honest with myself I can admit that five sounds like a good number, and that *perhaps* the building up to the ‘stuck’ point started before that five year mark.

I can get a general grasp on when things started to slope downhill.

My job sucked in that mind numbing treadmill sort of way. It had for a supremely long period of time. Whose job doesn’t suck in some way at some point? It was however a job, I was grateful to have it, and there were some small aspects of it that were creative and what I was great at doing. There were also people I had been working with for a very long time whom I considered friends. Maybe not hang out with after hours, tell my most intimate secrets to friends, but they were people that I respected and whose company I genuinely enjoyed. It was positive human interaction. However, in conjunction with the job bleeding the very soul out of me, my personal life was at a rather low point. Long distance and less than enthusiastic communication from significant other will do that to a person. It was all general mal content.

Then something else started to happen. My own body started to betray me. What the hell was this bullshit?

I knew that something wasn't quite right. I knew that the anxiety, melancholy, and bone numbing weariness I was feeling was not normal. I know that a certain amount of those things can and is often very normal in the lives of most human beings on this planet. I knew that a certain degree of mine was normal because of the reality of my life. But I knew there was something else that was lurking about, so to speak. I knew that it was more than just normal angst. That and as time went on it felt like I couldn't breathe. I could get the air in, but once in my lungs it didn't seem to be doing anything.

Now understand this. It truly takes a near death experience for me to take myself to a doctor. I have this deep rooted terror and mistrust of the medical legions. I know that what I feel is intellectually ridiculous, but for some reason it is something I have not been able to come to terms with. Phobia sounds a little too precious. Trendy. A little too pop culture. My brain says yes, my body says hell no. So, when I am the one who starts poking around trying to find doctors to visit, and actually keeping appointments with said doctors, then yes, something is definitely NOT right.

Said doctors concluded I was normal. Oh, but maybe you should try taking this antidepressant.

Jesus.

I am not an anti-medication type of person. If medicine helps, then yes, a person should take it. Mathematical equation right? This + This = Feeling better. Right? In most cases I would say yes. I however have this 'thing' about antidepressants. Every time I have explained how I am feeling to a doctor, and if that statement contains the words 'anxiety' or 'sad' or 'unhappy' or 'stressed' the first thing they do is pull out their PDR for antidepressant medications. I have even seen a fucking shrink do this. I must express with great emphasis that it is a little less than reassuring

when a doctor, *a medical professional*, is looking up medications in a dictionary to see what it does and whether they think I should take that medication.

I got tired of side effects. I got tired of being a guinea pig. I got tired of doctors saying ‘try this one - well let’s try this one next – no? let’s try this one’ and on and on and on. How can a person be expected to take a drug that makes normal, plain and ordinary WATER taste bad? I got tired of the medicine making me feel worse than I already did. What was the point?

My self-prescription was to go home after work and make a martini in an impossibly tall, thin and spindly glass. I loved those glasses. I would have a cocktail, and I would cook. Those were my consolations. Oddly enough, that activity directly gave birth to the only thing I loved to do at work. I photographed what I cooked and then would write about it on Wednesdays. Delicious photos always make people want to read what is underneath it. It made my job tolerable. It made my evenings tolerable. I was however avoiding reality. I was avoiding the truth about a great many things.

It’s so depressing to know that something is wrong and have no one believe you, or worse, outright ignore the situation. It is heart breaking to be able to see that things are not as they should be and not be able to do anything about them.

It was going to be a long time before anyone believed me, even though everything kept getting worse. When things are bad long enough, and other people treat you like a hypochondriac drama queen you can start to feel like you are going completely insane. I know I did. I thought I was truly losing my mind. At the time I didn’t know that it was going to get even worse. A lot worse.

Guess what happened next?

Corporate layoffs started.

The barely contained panic was so palpable that entering the brand new multi-million dollar office building with its brand new state of the art multi-million dollar equipment was nauseating. Every day phone calls, emails, texts flew about the building. I was one of the well informed, having contacts in all departments that were in the know – always knew the most hush hush of what was about to happen and to whom. It was amazing to see the way management indiscriminately cut down employees that had been with the company for eons. It was amazing to see the blatant example of penny smart and dollar stupid.

I naively remained somewhat confident in my position. I was after all in a microscopically small department that was one of the few that made its budget, was innovative and made money for the company instead of losing it.

I of course was wrong.

POM CHERRY MARTINI

2 ounces very good vodka

1 ounce of Pom cherry juice (pomegranate and cherry juice blend)

Ice

Fill martini glass with ice and water. Pour vodka and juice over ice in cocktail shaker. Shake vigorously until your hand freezes to the metal of the shaker. Pour ice water out of martini glass. Strain mixture into glass. Apply to exhausted psyche. Repeat as needed.

How did I get here?

Really. What the fuck am I doing here?

Mexico? How the fuck did I end up in Mexico?

If you had asked me five years ago where I thought I would be NOW, believe me this option wouldn't have been something my brain could have pulled out of anywhere. I would have told you that I didn't have any idea where I would be, but I also couldn't have cobbled together a statement that in any way, shape, form, or fashion that would have resembled this. Happy?

Productive? Those might have been two words that I used tentatively, but they probably would have been in the statement I made none the less. Now, nothing could be further from my current state of existence.

If I were going to pick an exotic locale for relocation, the middle of Mexico would not have been at the top of the list. Hell, it wouldn't have been even close to the top twenty. How did this happen?

I could call where I am now hell, if hell was a lonely place, but I seriously doubt the devil leaves you alone to contemplate your afterlife. No, in hell one would have a lot of company I imagine. That sounds a little too melodramatic however. My day to day life is anything but dramatic.

Maybe all of this time that I have had to myself has a point. I just haven't figured out what the point is yet.

I have to believe that there IS a point. I have to believe that I will reach a stage where I can say 'AH HA! I finally get it!' Am I foolish to try to hold on to a small bit of hope?

That is one of the things I wrestle with on a daily basis. Am I being foolish for hoping that there is a point that I WILL discover? Even though my external life is more sedentary and solitary than it ever has been, I have all the time in the world to think. I do spend a great deal of time trying not to think, but there is so much time that I can't possibly hope to hide from thinking for an entire day. Each day. Every day.

I know that the brain and its round and round thoughts that chew on themselves are the reason a lot of people drink copious amounts of alcohol. I know that feeling one's brain bleeding can drive people to any one of the many different types in the rainbow of drugs on this planet.

I do drink. I enjoy the warm and numbing help of alcohol. I also know that it can make the thinking worse. Once again it is like math. A mathematical formula. Some people might reckon that drinking oneself into oblivion is just fine and dandy. That not remembering the hours one went through the night before the morning after is just fine. I however take another view of that scenario. Sure you might not remember the next day (completely anyway) but you DID have to go through all of the hours when the amount of alcohol consumed made everything you had to think about even worse. Crawling around on the floor mewling tears and berating the walls and anyone within hearing distance with drunken half-sensical sentences. No, that is not something that works for me.

Most drugs tend to make the thinking worse as well. I do envy the people that can smoke weed to relax and vegetate. That doesn't work for me though. It only makes the thinking worse, or I find myself standing on top of my refrigerator with a q-tip cleaning the kitchen door sill. Anything speedy would kind of defeat the purpose, hallucinogens... well let's just say set and setting make it a fucking insane notion right now, heroine... well, best to just not go there, other milder forms

of opiates... exactly that - mildly mood altering, and chemically brain balancing drugs we have already ruled out. The only drug that I have found that I can take that doesn't involve hangovers and wretched side effects, is Xanax.

Shit.

It does help with the wild beastly of anxiety, but it only shortens its tether for a finite amount of time – then it is off like a greyhound after a rabbit again. It's only a temporary relief – so that's that. At least it is something that can give me a respite without making me feel a whole lot worse after it has worn off. That's something at least.

My, what a lovely tangent. Booze and drugs. Don't I sound like a fine upstanding citizen.

But a citizen of where exactly?

I do dwell in an actual chartable location, but I can't call it home. It is a place that doesn't belong to me and I do not belong to it.

Oddly enough I find myself without country at the moment. How bizarre a statement is that to be able to make?

The 'without's' could make a long list right now, but it would be unseemly to dwell, right?

I am not averse to living in a foreign land. I love to travel – the more culturally diverse the better.

I like being in places where the faces are varied and don't look like me. I love discovering the differences in cultures, especially through food. So why does this place feel so alien to me?

Cooking used to be my balm. Feeling heart sick and mind weary could be remedied by wandering into the kitchen and spending my time peeling, chopping, seasoning, sautéing,

roasting, grilling, stewing. You get the idea. It was pleasure. Often my only pleasure. Now it just feels a little grey. It is as though all of the color, smell and flavor are gone. The apathetic voice in my head says ‘What’s the point?’ It’s not that I am denying myself the pleasure of the flavor of food. It is just that things don’t taste that good anymore. I hate that food has almost become the equivalent of fuel. Those who used to know me or those who used to read what I wrote about food would find me a stranger now. I find myself a stranger to my own self. How can I quantify and come to terms with what I am right now? I know this isn’t who I am. I am struggling to find a solution to be me again.

Thankfully all desire for food has not been lost. On rare occasions I do have a craving for something specific. Being located where I am sometimes makes the craving a moot point from the lack of availability, but sometimes what I want can be achieved.

For several days I have been wanting turkey. Oddly enough, I wanted something like Boar’s Head deli sliced roasted turkey. A sandwich made from this item to be exact. Alas that is not a possibility - actual turkey a more realistic option. And what would you know? I was able to find some pieces of fresh turkey at the grocery store – a rare outing for me, but one that was made. A whole turkey breast came home with me and yesterday I put it in the oven as soon as I had eaten breakfast.

When it came out of the oven it was very hard to wait for it to rest. I did restrain myself though. Who wants dry turkey? When my minutes of patience were over I sliced piece after piece off of the rib cage. I ate so much turkey that I had physical external stomach pain from the stretching. All I did was eat turkey. Just turkey. No vegetables. No starch. Just slice after slice of turkey – for me and my cat Roo.

It was a simple thing, but that was the highlight of my day. Hell - that was the highlight of my week thus far. It's the simple things that are best right? And my expectations are low. By that rational, doesn't it seem like I should be happy a good bit of the time? If expectations are low, then don't the most simple and small events constitute happiness? It's a conundrum that I can't quite reason out. I admit it, I am perplexed. I just don't know this person I keep company with every minute of every day. Who is this person?

I lost myself somewhere. How do I locate and retrieve that which made me... me?

Another one of those lovely questions to dwell on during the day. A question that I am unsure of how to answer. Sometimes I just want to scream at the wall 'WHAT THE FUCK?!' – but I know it won't do any good, because the wall is not going to talk back and philosophize with me.

It is what it is and I just have to get through the hours in front of me.

There *is* leftover turkey.

WHOLE ROASTED TURKEY BREAST

1 Whole fresh or thawed turkey breast – bones in tact

Olive oil

Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Rinse, pat dry, and place on a rack in a roasting pan. Drizzle skin with olive oil and rub to coat. Sprinkle liberally with salt and fresh cracked pepper. Roast in oven, turning pan from time to time, until evenly browned and juices run clear when flesh is pierced with a carving fork.

After removing bird from oven, let rest about 30 minutes. Slice.

Consume bits of crispy skin and as many slices of turkey you are currently able to hold. Enjoy blissful non-thinking tryptophan coma.

My boss was a genuinely good guy. In the management category I have not been exposed to a great number of those. Psychotic, Napoleonic, weasel-ly, idiotic, downright mean... I have experienced those traits many times over in various combinations. The descriptives could encompass volumes. But this guy was good. Smart, caring, would go to bat for his employees. That was why when he told me the company was eliminating my position I could see that it was something he didn't enjoy doing. In a way, I felt sorry for him.

I knew the whole company was a sinking ship even before I was told I would soon be disembarking on my own. It was weird. They built a huge new structure to house the company and they were eliminating so many employees that the building felt empty. A ghost ship. Skeleton crew only. I truly marveled at how they could continue to put out a daily product. When a company doesn't care about its employees it's easy to ask those remaining to do the work of more than one person. Of course they are going to agree to do more work because the other option is to not have a job. Some people were allowed to keep their positions as long as they agreed to large pay cuts. I was not given that option.

My position was being eliminated. They just couldn't tell me exactly when.

Brilliant. What the fuck was I supposed to do now?

I had been with this corporation for ten years. I despised how they treated their employees and I was under no illusions of any fuzzy loyalty type feelings. I knew they treated people like trash. I wasn't loyal to the company, but I was loyal to people that I worked with – had worked with for years. I was actually glad to be getting out. I knew that things were only going to continue to get worse, so it looked like as good a time as any right?

It still hurt like a bitch. The dawning realization of expendability hurts.

I think I took it very well though, other than the immediate dumfounded feeling and rage. Fuck these people right? I was able to look at what was continuing to happen at the company and yet be immune to it in a way because I was on my way out anyway. I knew that many people's days were numbered. I knew that the boss who gave me my marching papers would most likely be marching soon himself.

It was a sad thing to see, but not shocking.

Every day I witnessed something more ludicrous than the day before.

The eon employees I mentioned earlier? There was one little old lady who had been working for the company, in the same department for THIRTY years. No college diploma - just thirty dogged years of endlessly toiling for this company. When they told her she was out, she had some sort of attack or something. Blood. An ambulance had to be called. I wish she could have sued them for bodily injury.

Corporate America knows no justice. Use people up and throw them away.

That is what I saw.

I saw every bad cliché about companies and corporations, co-workers, managers, directors and presidents rolled into one while I worked there. Since I was told I would be leaving soon I was able to take a step back from the situation and watch the ridiculous unfold. What were they going to do? Fire me?

About a week after I was told about my eminent demise, an email went out inviting our department to a party. It was being thrown by publisher. It was to celebrate what a wonderful job

our department had done over the last quarter. It was to celebrate the fact that we made money for the company. Cheers! Thank you so much for doing such a great job.

I honestly couldn't believe I was expected to attend. Are you fucking kidding me? You just told me I was getting the boot, yet you want me to come and make merry because you say I am doing such a great fucking job?

Irony.

Experiencing such literal definitions in daily life doesn't seem to happen very often, but here I was getting an up close one act play of irony, all for my very own.

I sat in a conference room with my co-workers. Our department wasn't big – about ten people tops. I sat at a table that had been decorated with balloons and bits of bright colored detritus scattered about. I sat and listened to the guy who required my boss to get rid of me give a speech on how great and valuable we all were. I sat in nauseated silence as the head of human resources handed out discounted, on sale, left over doughnuts that were covered in sickly thick frosting in red white and blue.

'Don't you want one?' she asked with the forced human resources smile on her face. I would have dined more happily on road kill off blacktop in August. Could this moment REALLY be happening? You're kidding RIGHT?

I swear I felt like I had eaten mushrooms.

My friends and I looked at each other. We didn't say anything. We didn't have to. We were all thinking the same thing, but they also might have been waiting for me to snap and provide even more entertainment.

Ridonkulous, as my office mate liked to say.

I think that pretty much summed up the situation.

I was just trying to maintain calm. Simply trying to get through each day and waiting for the other shoe to drop. Weeks went by. More weeks went by. What kind of sadistic shit was this? Just let me know when my last day is for crying out loud.

My birthday was coming up. I had been working with the company for so long that I had a LOT of vacation time that I needed to burn.

Before the company wide cutbacks started they came up with a new policy. In the past, when you earned vacation time it was yours. You used it or if you left the company they owed you for that time. They owed you the dollar equivalent for the vacation hours you earned. Period. Of course when they knew they were going to be giving a large number of people the ax, what better way to save money then to no longer be required to pay up on something people earned.

I had taken some sick days, but that wasn't going to come close to depleting my earned time off, so I figured I would take some time off. I would take off a week for my birthday and go to the Caribbean and visit my boyfriend. What the hell, what else am I going to do right?

I filled out my vacation request form and turned it in.

The next day I was told they had figured out when my last day was.

The day before my vacation would have started.

I guess I should have expected one more good 'fuck you' from the company.

At least now I knew when my servitude was to come to an end. For better or worse I would at last be out of that hell hole. I told myself that sometimes things happen to put us on the path we might not ordinarily have chosen. I was trying to be positive and see it as a good thing. Sure, unemployment was a daunting specter, but at least I would be away from such underhanded and dishonest dealings.

Right?

Actually, the knowing had an interesting affect. It was liberating. For months... for years, entering the building (new and old) each morning had been like despair pressing down on me. I was not the only person who experienced that. Knowing that I would soon be free put a smile back on my face. People commented on it. That place no longer had a strangle hold on me. I could see actual envy in the eyes of others. Yes, it sucked to be losing my job. Yes, it sucked to a frightening degree to be losing my pay check. But I was gaining something else. I was gaining freedom. Those that understood how oppressive that company was saw me as someone who was getting out of prison while they had to remain behind. I felt sorry for them. My heart wept at the thought of those who I held dear remaining behind to try to struggle through the carnage I was leaving behind.

My boss threw me a going away party... well, at least a break during the work day where our department went down to the cafeteria and ate cake together. I smiled. I was jovial. I ate cake. I could tell that my friends and co-workers felt a bit sorry for me, but they also could see that I was happy to be getting out.

I had packed up the years of flotsam I had collected and taken it home over the previous weeks, even before I knew when my final day was, so in the end I was unencumbered when it was

finally time to leave the building. I wrote an email thanking the people I had worked with and grown close to over the years. I told them it was an honor to work with them and that I had enjoyed our time together – that I would miss them. I blanketed a lot of people with that email. Responses were touching. One friend, who I had helped educate on finer points of etiquette and charm (he wanted to know how to court girls) brought me a large bouquet of sunflowers. It made me proud of him. Sunflowers mean good luck.

I said my final goodbyes and walked out the front door. I had not felt so light in years. I had a huge grin on my face. The weight that lifted off of me as soon as I was in the parking lot was unbelievable. More unbelievable was that I had lived with that weight on me for so long and didn't really know it was there. I was grateful.

I was free.

Friends in my department (boss included) decided that it would be fun if we went out to dinner together to 'celebrate.' Cuban food and beer seemed like an excellent choice. What better way to mark the end of an era than with cold El Presidente and Cuban sandwiches?

HOME TWEAKED CUBANS

A Cuban sandwich can be an extremely simple thing – roasted pork, ham, cheese, pickles, mustard – all grilled on bread. This version is the one I like to make at home when I have leftover carnitas.

Soft Cuban rolls (or hogie rolls, bolios, sandwich rolls, etc.)

Yellow mustard

Sliced Swiss cheese (or some kind of mild melty cheese)

Leftover carnitas, or un-sauced BBQ

Sweet sliced ham

Sliced dill pickles

Slice roll horizontally, spread with mustard. Layer cheese, pork, ham, pickles, more cheese and top of roll. Heat a cast iron skillet over medium flame. Brush with butter and gingerly place assembled sandwich into pan. Place another heavy pan (or object such as a brick) on top of the sandwich being careful not to displace sandwich innards. When bottom of bread starts to become crispy brown and bottom layer of cheese starts to melt, remove weight and carefully flip sandwich. Replace weight and brown other side of the sandwich.

Remove from heat. Cool slightly. Slice. Enjoy the piquant flavor of vocational freedom.