



I want/I need  
to be a beachmaster  
something else  
to get by  
the time  
bicycle  
enough close friends  
satisfaction  
someone for company

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### **I Want/I Need**

I'm a broken clock  
I've no time for you or anyone  
I can stand up straight  
Keep my face pristine  
But my hands hesitate  
I'm stagnant underneath

I'm a weathervane  
I go where the wind will blow me  
The rain is going to come I feel it in my knees  
It spins me round and round  
Wets my beak and wings

I'm not a mannequin  
I can't stay in this position  
I could bite my tongue  
And I could grind my teeth  
But I could change the world  
If I had space to breathe  
And I could take a walk  
Or I could take my leave  
And I could choose to chase  
What I want and what I need

### **Beachmaster**

They're calling me out  
I'll be there in a minute  
I brought on the heat  
Now I'm sinking in it

A beachmaster  
I wanted to be a beachmaster

I paid for my keep  
With bruises and stitches  
Now this is my beach  
And these are my bitches

A beach  
A beachmaster  
I wanted to be a beachmaster

I lie on the sand

No longer a swimmer  
So few understand  
What becomes of the winner

I wanted to be  
A beachmaster

I won this world of wonder  
But one must wonder what else there is to see beyond this beach

A beachmaster

### **Something Else**

What's that my inner senses?  
Seems I've been sleeping  
I've been a victim – pawn of the system too long

I'm clear on what innocence is  
It's just about the same as insane  
Every day the same – creature of habit no more

The decision isn't easy  
I wrestle with myself  
Is this the best for me  
Or is there something else?

There's always something else  
It's a blessing and a curse  
There's something better  
There's something worse

Oh how high this fence is  
So tall that I can see  
All the places I could be if I walk  
A whiney man of privilege  
I could buy more beans than any man could eat  
And I can eat lots of beans  
But I don't know what I want

I don't know the course just yet  
But I've seen this place before and I have no regrets

Life got in the way  
Coming back from it

## **To Get By**

If I try my hardest to get by  
I suppose I'll make it on this road  
It's blazed and worn by the travelers before  
It's the only way they'd ever known

But I'm a washed-up wreck with a yolk around my neck  
A void is growing in my soul  
Woe is me I could scream, but I'm discovering  
That woe is everyone I know

So I take my ax and I strike out from the pack  
To find another way to go  
While the rest trudge on I will break into a run  
And charge into the undergrowth

When I die I want to know I tried  
To cut myself another road  
So when they burn my bones and my ashes all have blown away  
I'll say I made this life my own

## **The Time**

I was just thinking of the time  
I caught you winking and your eyes  
Spheres of blue wane and wax and behind  
All the mountains I wanted to climb  
All the truths that I wanted to find

I was just dreaming of the day  
All of my fears went away  
Swallowed up in the shrouds of perfume  
And the lumens rose up in the room  
All the squirrels and birds start to sing  
That I had it going my way  
That I had it coming to me

I can remember the time  
You walking towards me  
Kept on walking by 'cause I didn't say  
All the things that I wanted to say to you  
All the things that I wanted to play out  
All the ways that I wanted to go  
All the things that I wanted to know

It's too late  
And there's nothing, nothing for me

I was just thinking of the time

### **Bicycle**

I want to be with a girl who rides a bicycle  
Her pant leg rolled up, tank top is full  
She's on a low emission mission and she's getting there  
She doesn't care what they think about her helmet hair

Ride on

I want to be with a girl who rides a bicycle  
I've been spending too much time with chemicals  
I want to ride for miles, I want to ride for days  
I want to ride with her, she wants to ride with me

And if she falls down, she's going to bleed bleed bleed  
It's worth the risk to feel the breeze breeze breeze

What I need is a girl who rides a bicycle  
She knows her way around town, she takes on only what she can handle  
She can teach me the ways of simplicity  
As we bike our way through the city

Ride on

I want to be with a girl who rides a bicycle  
I can't help but watch her power up that hill  
Glutes of steel, iron lungs in a sports bra  
She's pure green energy: powered by ethanol

I want to be with a girl who rides a bicycle

### **Enough Close Friends**

My pillow is soft my pillow is clean, but it won't talk to me  
My TV talks but it won't laugh or go for walks with me  
My dog will walk but she won't kiss, she'll piss upon the street  
I bought a kiss a chocolate kiss – delicious – melted on me

And what I'm trying to say  
Is I want something more than something I can pay for

I want someone to say my name  
When I slip into bed at 2 AM a drunken mess

I've got enough got enough close friends  
And I walk alone when the party ends  
When push comes to shove  
I've been longing for love  
I've got enough got enough close friends

My eyes will close but I won't doze without the symphony  
Of restless rolls and warmth of clothes here lying next to me  
I cool my jets by cruising on the internet  
I send a set of texts to see if you are missing it  
I work my pecs to impress you when I see you next  
But I lack the flexibility to ease my stress

And what I'm trying to say  
Is I want something more than something I can pay for  
I want someone to say my name  
When I slip into bed at 2 AM a drunken mess

I've got enough got enough close friends  
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### **Satisfaction**

Wake up  
You'll never be the way you see yourself in all your dreams  
Chances are you'll still add up to something  
Grow up  
Your childhood is gone, but you can giggle, you can play, and you can sob  
Once the job is done.  
Once you're alone

Cheer up  
You won't always smile, but I can promise you'll be happy for a while  
Satisfaction is the trip not the destination  
Get up  
From broken planes and bones, lactic acid, plot holes, magnets  
Tragic, but sometimes you can't go home

Sentimental

And now I find I can change my mind  
All the sings that I have songed  
All the words that I have wronged  
Are all behind me now

Set up

Those pictures on display and reminisce about the way you saw today  
When today had been a long time coming

Blow up

Those books and earned degrees, it seems our hearts are all we need  
Brains are made to control the pumping

Sentimental

And now I find I can change my mind  
All the sings that I have songed  
All the words that I have wronged  
Are all behind me now

### **Someone for Company**

When you call me up I'll run  
Wrap you up in loving arms  
I say when not if because  
I know you love me

When we wake up to the sun  
Still wrapped up in loving arms  
We've got everything we want  
And all we need

The mountains, sun, and sea  
Sangria pool party  
The song and melody  
Someone for company

Simple wishes  
Wash the dishes

When I drift off to my dream  
Nothing's changed - still you and me  
We've got everything we want  
And all we need

The mountains, sun, and sea  
Sangria pool party

The song and melody  
Someone for company

Simple wishes  
Wash the dishes



## I Want / I Need Liner Notes

### Album Overview

In 2015 I completed my graduate degree and accepted a position as a combination research/teaching post-doc in San Antonio, Texas. I had lived in Santa Cruz, CA for six years and had a difficult time leaving everything life in Santa Cruz had given me: living and working with friends, biking to the ocean, running the trails under the redwoods, mastery of my field, and a true sense of belonging. In order to take the next step to forward my career, I moved to a new part of the country where I knew no one and I disliked the climate. This transition left me questioning the direction of my life. I felt I had been swept up by external pressures. Was I making my own decisions to satisfy my own desires? Or was I mindlessly attempting to scale the pre-defined ladder of academia (elementary school → middle school → high school → college → graduate school → post-doc → professor → tenure → death) without checking in on my own values?

- The album cover is an image of sunset at Natural Bridges State Beach in Santa Cruz, CA
- The songs on I Want/I Need were written from 2007 to 2016.
- All songs were recorded in my one-bedroom apartment in San Antonio, TX in 2015-2016.
- Most of I Want/I Need was recorded in dark cramped quarters, at 80 Fahrenheit, during 10 hr+ sessions. My recording environment was noisy. In order to cut down on ambient noise and electronic interference, I unplugged my air conditioner, refrigerator, fans, turned off all of the lights, and crammed myself and my recording equipment into my 3 ft x 6 ft bathroom for hours on end.
- I did not have appropriate recording equipment for this project. Recording was performed on a 2008 laptop, using the built-in microphone or a USB condenser microphone. The RAM on my computer was barely able to support multi-layer recording and the computer would crash regularly. I sometimes had to record 30-second segments of music in hundreds of takes, which then had to be cut and mixed together in post to produce the final song.
- The track titles for the album were intentionally selected and formatted to look like a wish list with one exception. The song "Bicycle" should have been called "A Bicycle", but I forgot to fix it. I guess "Now that you don't have to be perfect, you can be good" – Steinbeck, East of Eden.

## SONGS

### **I Want / I Need**

The title track is the thesis of the album. I sing from the perspective of items in a thrift shop: a broken grandfather clock, a rusted weathervane, and a mannequin. All three of these items have been worn down and discarded by their previous owners and have lost their sense of authority. The grandfather clock looks elegant, but due to its 'injury' it can no longer serve its primary function of helping others by giving them the time. The weathervane speaks as a victim – It has been pushed around by the wind and rained on. Mannequins represent the ideals of human society. They are forced into positions by shopkeepers in order to sell an image and must maintain their composure for long periods of time. But the mannequin in this song begins to consider abandoning expectations to take charge of its own life.

### **Beachmaster**

In 2015, I would lay in bed at night with the windows open to listen to the barking of sea lions from over a mile away. It was almost as if they were beckoning me to go for a walk to come see them. But I was busy writing my thesis. While I slogged through the hundreds of pages of data that I had generated, I came upon the realization that the outcome of successful work is not merely the desired product and the pride that comes from completing it, but also an ever-growing to-do list. Work begets further work and success can be a limitation.

I wondered if the sea lions experienced a similar phenomenon. They seemed to spend most of their day lounging on the wooden platforms next to the pier, but I had also seen them battling for position on overcrowded rocks. If one sea lion fought hard enough to gain a highly coveted spot on that rock, they certainly couldn't celebrate for long. With their success came the responsibility and anxiety associated with defending their position. A seal lion on a rock cannot rest comfortably. It must always be alert and aggressive toward invaders.

Male elephant seals, called beachmasters, claim harems of female elephant seals and aggressively defend their territory on the beach from other males. It must be exhausting.

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2011/07/cheating-beachmaster>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cv9xwEKCH\\_g&ab\\_channel=BBCEarth](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cv9xwEKCH_g&ab_channel=BBCEarth)

I recalled an episode of "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee" with comedian Jerry Seinfeld and President Barack Obama. Seinfeld brought a 1963 Corvette Stingray to the Whitehouse so the two of them could go for a joy ride. But the President of the United States, the Leader of the Free World was not allowed to take the car off of the White House grounds. Instead the two drove in circles around the driveway. "Anonymity is not something that you think about being valuable." Obama told Seinfeld. Power and popularity had made the president a prisoner in his own home.

Beachmaster asks What is the cost of success? Does one really want power and fame? Might being powerless be more enjoyable? The song is written from the perspective of a successful beachmaster who has grown weary of defending his territory. He considers going back to the ocean and traveling.

- Beachmaster marks my first time recording with a drum machine. And you can tell.

## **Something Else**

This is a song about choice paralysis, the idea that we have a difficult time making decisions when our options are too many in number or difficult to compare. When we realize that there are infinite options for us, we may have difficulty committing to an outcome.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Paradox\\_of\\_Choice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Paradox_of_Choice)

I wasn't the only graduate in 2015. Many of my friends were leaving Santa Cruz too. We had many conversations about next steps, academia or industry, local or abroad, etc. The chorus for Something Else was born from a serendipitous rhyme that emerged during one such conversation with a friend. Either he or I said, "There's always something else, it's a blessing and a curse." And the other replied "Something better, something worse." I wrote down the words and sat on them for several months.

Although I had made the decision to move to San Antonio and start a new position there, I couldn't bring myself to fully commit to my new situation. I was on the fence, and "oh how high" that fence was. My mind was plagued with the thought that I may have given up better opportunities. But then again, I was getting paid. I could "buy more beans than any man could eat", so was it wrong for me to complain about my situation? Other people in the world had it much worse off than me. But why did I feel so awful? And what did I really want? I tried to convince myself that everything would be ok by writing "I don't know the course just yet, but I've seen this place before and I have no regrets."

## **To Get By**

When you are a student in high school, you are told what your goals are and where you are going to next. You're going to college of course. You're going to college because your teachers went to college. That was a successful strategy for them, so it will certainly be a successful strategy for you. Right? No questions asked. If you are doing well in college, a professor will reach out to you and ask if you want to work with them on a research program. If you do well in that research program, the professor will tell you that you should go to graduate school. Why? Because your professor sees herself in you and rationalizes that since she found success by going to graduate school, you will too. Besides, your professor isn't intimately familiar with an alternative path to success, so she's biased toward recommending the one that she took. At the completion of graduate school, all of your mentors are professors and if they see promise in you, they want you to become a professor too. And so it goes. We find our mentors inside our institutions and communities. They can best mentor us on the paths that they have taken. If we want to ensure success, we copy our mentors. The path is known. The path is set out for us. We are fools not to follow the path of least resistance. Right?

But I felt that something was wrong with my life, and I would complain about it a lot. But when I looked around and took time to listen to others it was obvious that I wasn't alone. Everyone was struggling in some way. "Woe is me I could scream but I'm discovering that woe is everyone I know." Is it supposed to be that way? Is that just life?

I dreamt of a parade of people marching through the jungle toward some monolith in the distance. The destination was defined, and the path was eroded from the footsteps of the travelers before us. There was only one path to the structure at the end, and that was the safest most obvious way to go. But there were untold wonders in the deep dark unexplored jungle surrounding the pathway. I asked myself what it would be like if I were to stray from the path into the unknown. Maybe I would find others more like myself in the brush. Maybe there were other groups of people walking toward other monoliths out there. Maybe I would build my own monolith and others would visit.

## **The Time**

This song is about lost opportunity. The narrator is enchanted with someone to the point where the room seems to light up and “squirrels and birds start to sing” as in a fantastical Disney film when the love interest is present. But when the narrator has a chance to confess his love, he doesn’t say anything.

One day in 2014 I returned home from work. None of my roommates were around. I pulled out my guitar and decided to play as loudly as I could in the living room. I hit record without knowing what I was going to play. I composed the melody of what would become The Time in a single take. When I came across the recording two years later, I enjoyed the spontaneous energy and stripped-down acoustic guitar and vocal so much that I decided to re-record the song with pre-meditated lyrics. Unfortunately, the original guitar recording could not be isolated from the original mumbling vocals, so the final song includes a re-recorded guitar part that lacks the magic and intensity of the original.

## **Bicycle**

I began online dating around the time that I wrote “Bicycle”. What was I looking for in a girlfriend? Well, she had to be athletic, independent, intelligent, pragmatic, minimalistic, environmentally/socially conscious, tough, and adventurous. She had to be physically attractive but not too worried about her appearance. She would have to be the kind of person that you could get a beer with...oh...and she’d bike to the bar with me. The criteria in this song became a checklist for screening potential dates.

I finally found her.

## **Enough Close Friends**

Friends are great if we want friends. But if we want a relationship that is more intimate, then friends are a booby prize.

This song took almost 10 years to move from concept to the recording in I Want/I Need. I started writing this song in 2007 while attending college. I was single and lonely. I would go out

to parties with my friends and always come home alone. I wrote the guitar part in my dorm room and developed the chorus. I finished the first verse and chorus on a particularly rainy day during my solo through-hike attempt on the Long Trail in the summer of 2007. As I plodded through the mud I was overtaken by an overwhelming sense of loneliness and the song crystallized. I recorded a first draft of the song in DongYing, Shandong in 2008. In 2014, I brought the song to my friends in the band Transition State. Zefan, Alicia, Ian, Kenji, and I fleshed out the song with drums, bass, keyboard, and backup vocals for a few live performances. The version of Enough Close Friends on I Want/I Need was inspired by the composition of the live performances with Transition State.

### **Satisfaction**

I suppose this is a message to my younger self. I wanted to tell my younger self that things wouldn't turn out the way I had expected and that a lot of life is toil with little reward. But we have to enjoy the process and learn to be resilient in the face of setbacks. We are not tied to a path. We can change direction at any time. We should not fall victim to the sunk-cost fallacy. When we look back at what we've achieved in our lives, do our academic and professional accomplishments really matter as much as foundational things like our relationships?

- The main guitar part was recorded in 2008. All other parts were recorded over it in 2015.
- I discovered a new synthesizer module and went a little crazy with it for the first minute of the song.

### **Someone for Company**

I wanted the album to end on a lighter note to emphasize something was learned from the explorations in the previous nine songs. In Someone for Company, I resolve that I want and I need simple things to be satisfied (i.e. the beauty of nature, music, socialization, and love). Sometimes it's the simple things in life, like a job well done, that make us feel like we are in our proper place and in control (wash the dishes).