

Swan Song

By: Noah Regan

For all of you out there who don't know who I am, this is for you. For all of you that have never listened to my music... you will. Fame is an impossible thing. Most who strive for it will never get it. And the chosen few that do get famous pretend they no longer want to be. It's those of us who've been relegated to obscurity that have it the toughest. Obscurity is a death all its own. And in such a case, death is the only cure for obscurity.

You still with me?

Creative people kill themselves all the time. It's a "tortured soul" thing. Hemingway did it. He did it by biting the barrel of his favorite shotgun—double barrel. His death was ruled "accidental". But I don't think he could have been much more deliberate than that. Hemingway's dad shot himself with a Civil War pistol—actually a lot of the Hemingways committed suicide. They were a family of lemmings.

When it comes to suicide men want nothing more than to die. They cut their wrists; blow their brains out, jump off buildings. Guys get shit done. Not like women. Women take a half a bottle of sleeping pills then cry on the phone to their ex-boyfriend. Women want attention. Women want to feel loved. Men want to feel nothing.

Van Gogh didn't do it right. He strolled out into a field and shot himself in the chest with a revolver. It didn't kill him. He walked back to the inn he was staying and hung out for two excruciating days before finally kicking off. His last words were "The sadness will last forever". Not a bad lyric, it's a little on the nose though.

Every day you make the decision not to kill yourself. It may not be a conscious decision. But it's a decision you make nonetheless. You don't steer into oncoming traffic on your morning drive to work. You don't empty your medicine cabinet when you come home.

If you don't know who Budd Dwyer is, you should. And if you do know who Budd Dwyer is it's only because of the way he went out. Budd shot himself with a pistol on live television. He started what would otherwise be a forgettable press conference, until he pulled a gun out of a manila envelope. He began to apologize while everyone around him pleaded to him not to do it. It didn't work. He shot himself through the mouth, fell to the floor and a cascade of blood flowed out of his nostrils.

There's no cry for help there. The only cries came from the people surrounding him.

Budd Dwyer did it right. Anyone else would have done it behind a closed door. Budd called a press conference to do it. That was his claim to fame. See also: Christine Chubbuck. She was a newscaster that fatally shot herself during a live transmission of a morning talk show back in '74. Her news director told her to concentrate on stories that have "blood and guts". She gave him just that.

We all know how Kurt Cobain did it. Kurt went out like Hemmingway. I know that I'm no Kurt Cobain. But after today my name will be said in the same breath as his.

The song is written. The base and drum tracks are laid. The only thing that's missing is lead guitar and vocals. I only have one shot at this. No second chances. What's the price of fame? Well, what is the price of your own life?

Create the fire... forgotten desire. Do you like that lyric or is it simplistic? It needs to be more abstract—vaguer, right? I want something that future fans will spend nights trying to decipher.

This is far from my first song. In fact I have an entire catalogue of music. You've just never heard it. But you will. Ever heard of *Blackout Records*? Of course you haven't. *Blackout Records* no longer exists. *Blackout* was an independent record label that went bankrupt after sinking over four-hundred thousand dollars into my album and tour.

No one truly understood my vision. No one truly understood my sound. I created an opus dedicated to the *Post-Imperial German Industrial Revolution*. I assemble a massive, green, belt-driven cast-iron machine for my premier stage performance—hypnotic flywheels thrust two hinged iron arms that chugged perfectly in synch with the metronome measures of my songs. Compressed air spit and spat through tiny openings in copper conduit—creating a rhythmic, pneumatic percussion that you could feel pound against your chest. Then at precise moments; the release valve would be thrown and compressed air bellowed through factory whistles during the song's apex, accompanied by modern European synthesizers. The performance was to show the power of the German industrial revolution—how it could be used to create the most powerful economy in Europe, and conversely used to propagate war.

It was my crowning achievement—three years in the making. It was to be my break out.

But they called me a Nazi sympathizer and boycotted my concert. *Blackout Records* quickly abandoned the project and eventually went broke.

The entire experience left me broken.

But, that's all going to change. This will be my last song. I'm going to die after it's recorded. This song will be a suicide letter put to music. Think *All Apologies* meets *In My Life*.

I'm Kurt Cobain, but with a vision.

My manager, Rich, will owe me big for taking the bullet on this one. He'll be singing my praises while sipping a piña colada on his yacht. More power to him. You see I don't want to get rich. I want to get famous. Obviously you can't get rich when you're dead. Let me rephrase that. You can't enjoy being rich after your dead. Just look at Elvis, John Lennon, Michael Jackson... their dead in the ground and are still making more money each year than you'll see in your lifetime.

Do you think those guys care what their estate revenue was last quarter?

I don't care about money. I simply want to be remembered. I want kids to lionize me. I want this song to be the first song they learn to strum on their garage sale guitars. I want them to emulate my voice

as they try to sing my despair. They will be introduced to me through this song, and then discover all the songs that everyone else tossed aside. I want them to never forget my name.

Call it crazy. I call it posterity.

Phones ringing again... I know it's Rich. He's worried about me. He's not so much worried about me as he's worried about his paycheck. If he was truly worried about me he wouldn't have let the band split up. He would have told my "friends" to stick it out. He would have checked me into a hospital after I lost so much weight that my ribs pressed against my t-shirts and my vision began to blur from starvation—when my daily diet solely consisted of a single can of tuna, and all the coffee I could drink and cigarettes I could smoke. I was slowly killing myself right before their eyes, and they didn't care. But they'll care after I kill myself behind a closed door.

Leave a message, Rich. I won't get back to you.

Alright, it's time to do this. The song I wrote is equal parts sadness and catchiness. I've been planning this for a month. Sometimes the only way to get people to listen is if you silence your own voice.

Quick mirror check before I turn on the camera. I look too content. I need to appear more downtrodden... that's too much... there we are. Perfect. Brush my pin-stripe suit and straighten my tie. I shouldn't have put on a suit. I look like a corpse. I look like a scarecrow with AIDS. *Fuck it*. Should my bangs be in my eyes? Perhaps a little? It adds mysteriousness to my image. You don't want to overdo it and appear *emo* though. This isn't a pity party. This is the recording of a number one hit.

This will be my suicide note left for the world. My last words will be sung by every despondent teen. My sentiments will become theirs.

Do you know who Abel Flore Salazar is? You should. He's the inspiration behind my project. Abel Flore Salazar was a Spanish artist that decided to call it quits. But instead of simply going gently into that good night, he decided to annotate his own death. He considered it his last work of art. He loaded himself up with sleeping pills, then wrote exactly what he was feeling as his body began to give-out. It's brilliant. It truly is a work of art. It's all together one of the most selfish and selfless acts possible. He made one mistake though. He didn't finish his masterpiece. He couldn't write up until the very end. It's not that he didn't want to. I'm sure he would have scrawled his death rattle if he could've. But he did it over a hundred years ago. It was impossible.

Technology has fixed that problem. Salazar didn't have the convenience of a video camera. You'll be able to see a close-up of me up until my last throws. Enjoy it. I'm doing this for you.

"Check-check-check-mic-check-check check."

I plan to take a lethal cocktail of random barbiturates, Valium and Quaaludes. I don't know how much to take. It's moot to measure a lethal dose of anything. The key is to just take a lot.

I will essentially be suffocating to death. I'll fall asleep and eventually my chest will become too heavy and labored to support my breathing. My lungs will be suspended like a photograph, all while I'm sawing logs.

There's one wrinkle that people mess up when killing themselves with pills. You need to duct tape your mouth shut—if you don't you'll just end up throwing up the pills once you've passed out. Instead of dying a legend, you'll wake up a loser in a puddle of your own puke. Even if you convince your mind you want to die, your body will always want to live. It's a survival thing. If your mouth is duct taped shut it certainly won't prevent you from puking, but it'll prevent your puke from escaping. In that event you'll just end up asphyxiating on your own vomit. Not the most glamorous way to die, I know. But hey, death is messy after all. Not to mention accident or not, vomit asphyxiation worked out just fine for Bon Scott. It's sure as hell good enough for me.

Please be patient as I work as many pills down as possible. It takes more than you think. And I certainly don't want to be a chick about this. I want to do this right.

The pills are making my stomach growl. I should've eaten something. What the hell am I saying? Alright, just these last few. I need to hurry. I have to make it to the end of the song. Keep them down. For Christ's sake keep them down. It's going to ruin my one take if I'm streaming vomit between my teeth as I come to the melodic chorus.

Alright, let's do this. This is my kiss of the brass ring. This is my time to shine in the spotlight. This is for all the doors shut in my face. This is for everyone who couldn't see my vision. This is for all the fame I didn't receive. This is for all the girls I didn't fuck. This is it.

Press record, wait for red light.

Playback base.

Playback drums.

Grab my guitar, sit down before my legs give out, and look deep into the camera for the last time. I can feel the pills in my stomach. What's done is done. My bowels are quivering. There's no turning back now... sing like you mean it. Become the star you're destined to be.

"A revelation that has come to mind"

"I fear I'll die before I die"

"Slouching within existence yet defined"

"Convicts ceremony in cuffs and black tie"

"Fingers scratch creating the fire"

"Impaled with sodden white ash"

"Extinguished plaintive forgotten desire"

"Destined never to last"

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

A crackle in my voice. Shit. Don't worry about it. Think Elvis Costello meets George Harrison. It shows sincerity. It shows I mean it. My shoulders are sinking. I can't keep tempo with my guitar. My head keeps bobbing. GET IT TOGETHER! This is my one shot. Don't fuck it up. Sing with more passion. Sing for the last time!

“Heart beats shriek its cravings to defy”

“Forged deep within my core”

“A tangle of rooted veins petrify”

“Atrophied static for you to ignore”

“Drink up just a little, try spirits—et al spiritually”

“I've been pushed past muted oblivion”

“That's the benefit of being invisible—opaque invisibly”

“Just let me rest, let me sleep, let me be”

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

My tongue feels fat. I need to get out my heart wrenching lyrics. I need to make sure they're clear. I need to get my point across. My life is the remaining contribution to my masterpiece. This is my gift to you.

I'm losing ground.

I'm fading fast.

“Television flickers of fading dim stars”

“Time brings fortune to those who knew”

“That life lived tomorrow suffocates in bell jars”

“Interrupts your thoughts long after I'm through”

“The immortality of death is at hand”

“Vexed wasteland stenches anarchy in soft breeze”

“Gazes pitiless upon a thin plastic strand”

“The world thunderously grinds and begins to seize”

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

Tear up the guitar. Make my fingers bleed. I can't feel pain. Mash them. Break them. It's for my own good. Destroy my body! I don't care! Like a tissue about to be thrown away.

“Though I'm living, I'm not really alive.”

“Dazzling displaces confounds and sublimates.”

“Dejection breeds stale graces to revive.”

“Things just wrong just too many times.”

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

My guitar work is becoming sloppy. I'm way off tempo. That's good. I'm deconstructing before your eyes. Think *Piggy* meets *Aladdin Sane*.

“Burn the totems and effigies.”

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

The base and drum tracks have finished. It's all guitar now.

Play harder!

Play as long as I can!

Get blood on the face of the guitar. Keep my head up!

I'm sinking in my seat. Play harder!

Keep going!

The guitar is slipping. Fuck! It fell off my lap.

That's it... the hard parts over.

Duct tape. Grab the duct tape. I know I'm tired and can hardly lift my arms. But I have to do this if I want my song blaring from every car radio—from every cramped dorm room from coast to coast.

Place the tape over my mouth, my arms feel like two bags of wet cement. Wrap the tape around my head...once...twice...fuck... dropped it. That's no matter. That tape should hold. I can't reach the roll. Just leave it dangling off the side of my head like an earring. Take a look at yourself in the monitor... not the worst way to look before you die. At least I'm keeping my skull in one piece.

Now, one last thing—playback my track. Keep the camera rolling. I need to capture it all. You need to experience all of it. Come on hand. Steady... I've got this... I can do it. *Click*

There... success. Crank it up. This is the last song I'll ever listen to. Sit back, relax. I can finally rest. I deserved this.

I came in a little late with the guitar. Not bad though. It sounds intentional.

The opening lyric sounds cold. Think Lou Reed meets Johnny Cash. I can't move my body. I can't blink. I'm done now. Enjoy the song. I did great. Should I have said "pitiless"? I didn't want to say "perilous". Don't worry about it. You'll understand the message, won't you?

Pound—Pound—Pound

Someone's knocking at the door. Who the hell could that be?

"You home?"

Rich, you asshole. He almost fucked up my only take. That's no matter. He'll hear himself screaming through the door during my tragic video death that will be displayed on cheesy macabre websites.

"I can hear you in there! Open up!"

Go away. I'm trying to die.

"You know if you answered your fucking phone I wouldn't have to drive my ass across town. I realize you like to do the whole "brooding rocker" thing, but open your fucking door!"

Could you not mock me while I'm taking my last breaths?

Pound—Pound—Pound

"I can hear you in there! You're gonna be an asshole? Let me in, man. I've got news!"

Rich, you piece of shit! I missed the first guitar solo. That was my one chance to hear it. Fuck you.

“Alright, I don’t care. I get it. I think you’ll answer the door after I tell you this... *Atlantic* gave your album another listen...”

Fuck.

“You know where I’m going with this...”

Fuck.

“They changed their mind. You’re getting signed.”

...

“Come on, man! Did you hear me? This is it! Stop being a bitch and let me in!”

Speak. DAMNIT SPEAK! Tear off the duct tape! Cry for help! I want to cry for help! I can’t lift my arms. I’ll use my tongue. I’ll push the duct tape away from my mouth with my tongue.

I can’t do it!

Pound—Pound—Pound

“Come on, man! You gonna to let me in? Your neighbors are looking at me like I’m a piece of shit. Let me in!”

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

I’m drowning. I’m sweating. I’m screaming. Listen to me, Rich! I’m crying for help!

My phone is ringing in my pocket. I know it’s you, Rich. There’s something wrong. You know it. Kick down my door. Help me!

Pound—Pound—Pound

I can’t keep my eyes open. This is it.

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

It’s too late. This is the end... look into the camera like you mean it.

“Burn the totems and effigies.”

“A martyr was all I was meant to be.”

“Do you think my death will interrupt my dreams?”

The guitar sounds good. The track sounds perfect... this will... this...is

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