What’s In Your Backpack?

How much does your life weigh?

Imagine for a second that you’re carrying a backpack. I want you to feel the straps on your shoulders. Feel them?

Now I want you to pack it with all the stuff that you have in your life. You start with the little things, the things on shelves and in drawers, the knickknacks, the collectibles. Feel the weight as that adds up.

Then you start adding the larger stuff: clothes; tabletop appliances; lamps; linens; your TV.

The backpack should be getting pretty heavy now and you go bigger: your couch, bed, your kitchen table. Stuff it all in there. Your car, get it in there. Your home, whether it’s a studio apartment or a two-bedroom house. I want you to stuff it all into that backpack.

Now try to walk. It’s kind of hard, isn’t it?

This is what we do to ourselves on a daily basis. We weigh ourselves down until we can’t even move. And make no mistake, moving is living.

Now, I’m going to set that backpack on fire.

What do you want to take out of it? Photos? Photos are for people who can’t remember. Drink some ginko and let the photos burn.

In fact, let everything burn and imagine waking up tomorrow with nothing. It’s kind of exhilarating, isn’t it?

Now, this is going to be a little difficult. So stay with me.

You have a new backpack. Only this time, I want you to fill it with people.

Start with casual acquaintances, friends of friends, folks around the office. Then you move in the people that you trust with your
most intimate secrets. Your cousins, your aunts, your uncles, your brothers, your sisters, your parents. And finally, your husband, your wife, your boyfriend or your girlfriend. You get them into that backpack.

Don’t worry I’m not going to ask you to light it on fire.

Feel the weight of the bag. Make no mistake, your relationships are the heaviest components in your life. Do you feel the straps cutting into your shoulders? All those negotiations and arguments and secrets and compromises.

You don’t need to carry all that weight. Why don’t you set that bag down?

Some animals were meant to carry each other, to live symbiotically for a lifetime. Star-crossed lovers, monogamous swans. We are not those animals.

The slower we move, the faster we die. We are not swans. We’re sharks.