

## **Results**

**870 words**

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Arthur sat at Vanessa's kitchen table after dinner one night and wrote out his Master Plan:

**Patience**

**Low Profile**

**Work**

**Glass half-full**

**Sustain carnivore diet**

**Less arguing**

Vanessa said fine, stick it on the fridge.

“Your fridge?” Arthur said.

“Whichever,” Vanessa said. “You need to add

**Overcome paralysis of analysis.”**

Arthur didn't see it like that, you had a choice, you wanted to do the best thing. He said, “You make yours and we're even.”

Surprisingly Vanessa didn't roll her eyes (that you could see) and she grabbed a notebook.

“How can you sit that way when you write?” Arthur said. “Your heels right under your rear end? Doesn’t it at least screw *something* up?”

Vanessa said no, and it didn’t take her long.

**Learn photography**

**Visit Patagonia**

**Dump run guy**

“Kinda thin there,” Arthur said. “And dump the *who* guy?”

Vanessa said, “If I were you I’d work on the work. The rest is touchy-feely garbage.”

Arthur checked his list. “I’m not following. Unless self-improvement is touchy-feely. Maybe it is though.”

“I get it already, you don’t like your job. So take some friggen action. You need to lose weight to find a new one?”

“Actually it never hurts. Something else about the carnivore diet--did you know it ups your mental acuity?”

“So you’ve said. You know who you remind me of?”

“One of those trolls in the internet forums?”

“My ex. He was always telling you what to read, what

to eat in restaurants. Who to root for on TV.”

“Stan? I liked Stan. That’s how diets work, you get in a groove. Not as bad maybe as the liquid ones. Those proselytize the hell out of you--they haven’t felt this good since JV football 30 years ago--then they gain the weight back pretty quick.”

“Speaking of Stan, he’s the one wants to go to Patagonia.”

“Sure, sounds good.”

“You’re seriously okay with that?”

“Why not? Uh-oh.”

“This is how you *feel*,” Vanessa said, “take your entitled little list and shove it.”

Arthur got out of there, thinking that’s too weird a reaction, guy wants to go to Patagonia with her and she wants to learn photography because there’s amazing natural wonders there--not like they’re getting re-married, what am I missing?

When Arthur got home he didn’t stick the list on anything, he tossed it in the fireplace and made a fire. His dad did that. His dad needed a new heating system one year and he had the money but he grew up in the Depression and couldn’t spend it, so he put on sweaters and beanies and built fires. Then he got a pipe going and

sat in his cracked-leather club chair and read novels.

Arthur had that chair now. He picked out one of the *Strangers and Brothers* by C.P. Snow. His dad loved those. Not much happens--certainly by today's standards--and his dad liked it that way.

The chapter titles were simple and perfect. *In the Rain. The Key in the Lock. Mr. Knight Tries to be Direct.*

*The Calm of a September Afternoon.* In that one the guy is trying to charm a woman. He boasts of his plans, tells her he should be a success. She is quite unimpressed.

On Saturday Arthur goes back to Vanessa's. He's borrowed his neighbor's pick-up truck. Vanessa opens the door and there's Stan in there with her.

Arthur said, "It took me a few days but I figured out what you meant by **dump run guy**. The stuff in the basement."

Stan nodded and shook hands. "Fire hazard down there," Stan said, "at the minimum."

Vanessa told Arthur he's out of line and to leave her alone. Stan said, "Babe, the man is here, let's at least support the man."

Vanessa went upstairs and Arthur and Stan started

putting basement stuff in the back of the truck. The load was piled way huger than Arthur would have attempted, but Stan said don't worry about it and cinched it all down with impressive trucker's hitches.

Stan said, "You know Nessie, she's not in great shape before breakfast."

It was around 1 o'clock but whatever. Arthur said, "I had a friend went to Patagonia. It started touristy but then got rugged. 300 foot tall glaciers melting into monster lakes. Falls that make Niagra look like tinker toys. Rainbows all over the place. There was one photo had a turtle riding on the back of a alligator."

"Where was *that* at?"

"Not sure. Specifically, that'd be the most interesting part?"

"No, I want to avoid that. I don't care for alligators."

Arthur lived in Florida once and couldn't disagree. You have to treat every body of water like there was one in there. He said, "Just don't camp or anything, and you should be good."

Stan thanked him for being a good sport with Vanessa.

Arthur was sweating when he came home from the dump run, he felt it in the shoulders. He got comfortable

and resumed the C.P. Snow. The new chapter is *Triumph and Surrender*. The guy is juggling a couple women now--but maybe not really, he seems to get along best with his landlady. You didn't have to be anywhere, let's see what he comes up with.