

## Life Story

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## Life Story

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

**[GRIAN]**

*(A little softer)* You don't need to worry about me, Mumbo.

Now. What did you come in here to tell me? You've got something there, I can see- give it.

**[MUMBO]**

...Patient as ever. Well, remember when you told me to look into that Pix R. person?

### Notes

definitely have read [the obituary section](#) and [the vigil](#) before this one!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

[Click]

**[MUMBO]**

-but you're... okay?

**[GRIAN]**

Yes. I mean- well. I will be. *(A little softer)* You don't need to worry about me, Mumbo.

Now. What did you come in here to tell me? You've got something there, I can see- give it.

**[MUMBO]**

...Patient as ever. Well, remember when you told me to look into that Pix R. person?

It was a few months ago, now. I finally got around to pulling some things together from the library while you were... out. I was stuck on it for a good while, but I wound up getting some help from a fellow who's been around here the last few weeks working on some university project or something.

*(Sound of papers on wood)*

**[MUMBO]**

Some of these are excerpts, some are just fragments- I didn't include the statements you already had picked out as relevant, which were... statement [9091029](#) and [9810609](#).

Several different languages- Pearl told me not to fuss too much about finding translations? This guy's been around a bit, I can tell you that much. There's one transcription of, uh, cuneiform...

*(Papers shuffling)*

**[GRIAN]**

You are my *best* friend, I *love* you- oh, this is *brilliant*.

**[MUMBO]**

*(Laughs)* I've never seen someone so excited about documents.

**[GRIAN]**

Oh, leave off. We all have our vices, Mr. 'the mechanics of an internal combustion engine are really quite simple.'

**[MUMBO]**

They *are*- you were going to be an *engineer*-

**[GRIAN]**

I was going to be an *architect*!

**[MUMBO]**

*(Laughing quietly)* I'll leave you to it.

*(Footsteps leaving)*

**[GRIAN]**

Right. I'll just record each of these individually, I suppose- Mumbo's ordered them from oldest to newest, which is a balm for my nerves.

We're starting with... ancient Mesopotamia?

Well. I suppose you have to start *somewhere*.

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**[GRIAN]**

Text copied from clay tablet excavated outside Samarra, modern day Iraq, probably circa 1200 BCE. Unknown author.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

Last night, I told my life to a lantern, to remember me when I'm gone. This morning, the lantern was still burning. Now, I am terrified of what will happen when it burns out. The hour of my appointment is nigh.

Perhaps by the time this reaches you, the oil will already be gone. I hope you will understand.

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**[GRIAN]**

Graffiti preserved off a wall in Pompeii, Italy, dating from some time prior to 79 CE. Again, unknown author.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

All our days are written, and there aren't many left!

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**[GRIAN]**

Scrap of a journal page dating to 779 CE or so, the Frankish Empire, Aquitaine. Unknown author.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

He told me, just before he left for Iberia, that he had had a premonition. A man had told him the day and hour of his end. Had told him that he would fight bravely, but would not survive the battle. I urged courage, at the time. Now I wish I had urged him to stay. He would not have heeded, I know; his obligations to him were over all.

He said the man had promised him one thing, besides death, and it was that his life would be written down and remembered for ever. I can only hope it is true.

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**[GRIAN]**

Fragmented poetic verse of a series originating in Marrakesh, now modern Morocco, sometime between 1150 and 1220 CE. Likely related somehow to the events detailed in statement 9091029.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

Death has a gentle demeanor, and his hands are stained with ink. He goes out at dusk and returns at dawn; he is like an old friend.

Death lodges in my home, and is nothing but polite. He offers me money I do not take. He says he has no control over when one dies, or why. He says he is a writer. He says he is sorry about my daughter. He tells me of a place in the desert where I could see her life, bear witness to her death.

He says I have a long time left to live. He has ink and sand beneath his fingernails.

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**[GRIAN]**

Text from a history of the royal court of the Mali Empire regarding a foreign visitor sometime between 1330 and 1335 CE.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

Many dignitaries and foreign travelers to Mali, hoping to maintain positive relationships with the empire, came bearing expensive gifts for the *mansa* in thanks for his hospitality. Among these treasures was a finely bound book from a European traveler whose name has not been recorded. As the book is apparently the only surviving copy of its text and contains multiple intact narratives in Middle English, it is an object of significant interest to historians. The book has no official title but has sometimes been called ‘Memento Mori’, or simply ‘The Plague Book.’

The story recounts several parables about death that can be traced to common mythological threads from around the world. The final story is of particular interest, as it centers on a young London man’s attempts to avoid contracting a plague sweeping through his city. Historians have noted that the work seems to predate the onset of the Black Death in Europe.

No clues to the identity of the book’s author or deliverer have been found.

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**[GRIAN]**

Record from the port of Macau, Ming Dynasty China, 1558, regarding the arrival of a trade ship from Portugal.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

Galleon carrying primarily silver imported from the New World, intended to trade for silk and porcelain, arrived today. One curious traveler, apparently not a normal crewman of the ship, spoke passable Cantonese and talked for some time with port laborers, causing excitement and some minor delay in the unloading of the ship.

When asked, the traveler gave his name for the record as P. Riffs, his nationality as English, and his trade as author. He expressed that he had a scholarly interest in religious and funerary practices, and hoped to travel ashore to mainland China. His petition has been forwarded to the local authorities.

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**[GRIAN]**

Note preserved off a collection of recipes from a home in Kharkiv, then part of the Russian Empire, now modern Ukraine, around 1765.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

The Englishman who is directing the expansion of the church graveyard does not eat much no matter what I try to feed him. Infuriating.

They say he does this for free, as well. What sort of man travels to a far country to do the work of exhuming overcrowded corpses for no cost?

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**[GRIAN]**

Note written by a priest in Milan, Italy, dated March 1848.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

There is gunfire still thundering outside. It has been three days, now. Those who cannot fight are sheltering in the church; it remains safe, so far. Lord willing, the fighting will not come in here.

There is a man here who I do not know, and he is lighting candles. He does it with no regularity- the intervals may be minutes or hours. But he will stand and place a candle, or two, or a handful, on the nearest shrine, and light them, and then return, in silence, to the pews.

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**[GRIAN]**

Letter written from a resident of Paris to- presumably- the writer's family, in Lyon. Dated January, 1871.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

I met a strange man at Père Lachaise today, on my way back from father's grave. He was looking at the blank wall at the far side of the cemetery with an expression I couldn't fathom. Mournful, I suppose, but there are no graves there.

You know I have always been too curious for my own good. I walked to his side, and asked him if he was missing someone.

He said he was, in a way. He was not French, I think, but his French was good enough- a little old fashioned, though I think he was about my age. He told me he was thinking about the future. He said he was a historian, of sorts, in the business of memory. He said sometimes the most mundane things can become monuments to lives lived.

I'm not sure I understand what he meant, but I have been thinking about it since.

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**[GRIAN]**

Excerpt from an article in the Times of London, regarding the last night's bombings, December 31, 1941.

**[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]**

Among those I spoke to in the shelter was a man who seemed extraordinarily well-composed, despite the bombs shaking the earth above us.

I asked him if he wasn't afraid, and he shrugged and smiled and said nothing much fazed him, at this point. He said he had been traveling outside Britain for some time before coming home. I asked him why he would come back to London now, of all times, and he said he had felt an obligation.

Just then, another bomb exploded what sounded like directly over our heads, and the earth seemed to rattle. A nearby boy, apparently without his parents and bravely silent until then, burst into tears. The man I'd been speaking to immediately stood and moved, sitting beside the boy and talking to him softly until he quieted.

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**[GRIAN]**

And... it looks like that's it.

That makes Sloy's statement from- what was it, 1981? That makes that the latest piece of the timeline, then... which makes sense, because he did say they were considering relocating to America after that. Though-

Oh, now, *wait* a moment, that *reminds* me. (*paper shuffling*) Where is [that statement](#) from Nebraska?

(*Pause, papers being moved*)

Here! Right! Obituaries... that would track with the timeline we have, as well. And this was 2011- still some time ago, but much more recent than the other statement.

Okay, that gives me something more to work with. We don't have *as* many sources from the US, but there's a lot of documentation out there. If Mumbo was able to put all *this* together, I'm sure we can...

(*Extended pause*)

Hold on a moment.

(*Sprinting footsteps, talons clacking*)

*Mumbo!*

[Click]

[Click]

*(Feathers fluttering)*

**[GRIAN]**

*-bo Mumbo Mumbo Mumbo-*

**[MUMBO]**

What! What, what, what happened?

*(Papers shuffling)*

**[GRIAN]**

You said someone helped you put these together, right? Who?

**[MUMBO]**

Oh- um, it was just- he was a PhD student doing history research, I think he said? I don't remember his name.

**[GRIAN]**

What did he look like? Is he still here?

**[MUMBO]**

He had... brown hair and a beard? I don't know what you want from me here. He was very normal looking. He came in regularly for a couple weeks and then said he'd gotten everything he needed- I think the day before you got back from, um, Cleo's.

*(Pause)*

**[MUMBO]**

Why? Is something wrong?

**[GRIAN]**

And he helped you find all those documents.

**[MUMBO]**

Yeah, honestly don't know how he- *(quiet thump)* what?

**[GRIAN]**

*(Muffled)* Nothing. Never mind.

**[MUMBO]**

Alright.

Gonna take your face out of my shirt, there?

**[GRIAN]**

*(Muffled)* Nope. I'm coping. Just give me a moment.

[MUMBO]

Got it.

[Click]

## End Notes

called this one "epixtolary" while writing

uhhh yeah! this one now holds the title of 'statement that made jonny do the most background research.' a few notes on the various events referenced here:

- samarra, iraq, is the namesake of the story 'the appointment in samarra', supposedly a retelling of an ancient mesopotamian tale about the inevitability of attempting to flee death
- obviously pompeii was destroyed in a volcanic eruption in 79 ce
- the 778 battle of roncevaux pass is known as charlemagne's greatest defeat. the death of roland, a commander of the frankish army, in this battle served as the inspiration for the song of roland, the oldest surviving work of french literature
- mansa musa, ruler of the mali empire from about 1312–1337, was probably one of the wealthiest people in history
- during the ming dynasty european trade, to china was restricted to a few ports, such as macau. trade ships from spain and portugal mostly brought silver extracted from colonized latin america in massive quantities
- the five days of milan was popular insurrection in 1848 and one of the inciting events of the first italian war for independence against the austrian empire
- père lachaise is the largest cemetery in paris; it is the location of the wall of the communards, where partisans of the paris commune were executed and buried in a mass grave in may 1871
- the bombing campaign of the london blitz took place from september 1940 to may 1941; one of the most destructive attacks took place at the end of december, when thousands of incendiary bombs were dropped on the city
- pix spent about three hundred years meaning to get around to visiting the americas and didnt get to it until the 1980s

also i want it on the record mumbo knows stuff about engineering but he did not study engineering. he studied film

i am sure there are some historical inaccuracies here, as always when i do a statement set in the past, but i'm quite proud of this one and i hope you all enjoyed! ONE MORE STATEMENT AFTER THIS ONE! and if you did enjoy, please leave a comment!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!