



I washed my car (myself, by hand) on Saturday. It looks great, I swear. I haven't taken it out of my garage since I buffed the last drop dry. It's Tuesday as I write this.

A few hours after I sequestered the spotless auto, the sky exploded. Violent thunderclaps, lightning flashes all around, a downpour direct hit on top of my daughter's engagement photo shoot. Saturday at 6 seemed like the end of the world...until it was sunny at 7:30 and I was sipping coffee outside. Sunday afternoon delivered more of the same. Monday, too – with the extra drama of falling trees, flooded streets, and a power outage disruption to my nighttime TV routine. Conscious of the daily-repeating pattern: increasing heat, rising humidity, thundershowers, big puddles – I've driven my dirty pickup truck instead of my gleaming testament to my own labor, that sits silently, emitting the subtly toxic bouquet of lingering tire shine spray.

If a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound? If a spotless car sits in a garage, hidden from human eyes, does it matter that you cleaned it? The question might not be as provocative as Schrodinger's* enduring (and – hopefully – untested) Cat Experiment (Look it up), but it highlights a sad irony: The moment we complete a thing satisfactorily, the conditions surrounding the thing begin to degrade it, which tends to transform the joy of the accomplishment into a fleeting memory rather than suspend it in a state of perpetual bliss.



it is not doing the work it was designed to do. Pretty but useless. Proud but hidden. Soon, I will get behind its wheel and steer it straight to its inevitable state of filth.

If this essay seems like this is a nihilist rant, let me try another angle. A more hopeful one. For now, I love the way my car looks. It will still look pretty darn good when I put it back in its resting place after taking it for a spin. And I own a bucket, soap, wash mitt, and hose. There is a solution, sometimes a simple, soapy one, to every problem I face. There is always a thing to do. I just need to do it. The outcome will take care of itself. There will be puddles. There will be dirt. Eventually, I'll be bent over, dripping with sweat, shining the last spoke on the fourth wheel, pleased with my effort and anxious to admire my work. In that moment of accomplishment, I'll be at once content and cognizant that I have something else that I need to get to, and grateful that I have the choice, will, and ability to get to that thing, and the thing after that.

I just looked at my weather app: No rain through Saturday! Which seems like an impossibly optimistic and imprudent-ly bold assertion, but I'll take it, and so will my car.

I'd type a few hundred more words now if I weren't itching to go for a ride. But I am.

Stay inside, safe, and dry when the heavens erupt again. Until next time...

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