A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
6:00 am. A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Going from the beloved horizontal to the hateful vertical position, the first thoughts Ernesto threads regularly through the cogs of his mind enact a boxing match between his good and bad intentions.

Every morning Ernesto jumps out of bed and steps on a landmine. The landmine is Ernesto himself. After the explosion, he spends the rest of the day putting the pieces back together.

As he glances into the red disk of his looking glass, Ernesto realises that he has managed, once again, to find himself on the wrong side of the mirror. He is dismayed to find that, even here, he is assaulted by 7 o’clock sights and sounds: sunshine rays, brave radios, underground zigzags, starched ribbons, black briefcases, steaming cups, fast centipedes and fresh new shadows.

By the time he finds his tortuous way back through the looking glass he is ready for breakfast. He hopes that eating some food will stitch him securely to this side of the world for the rest of his day.
7:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Bones was a messy eater.

In all other areas of his life he was fastidious. He always wore a dove-grey Brioni suit. Always wore hand-tailored shoes the colour of softened caramel. His home was an immaculately conceived arrangement of graceful objects. Balletic bronzes on plinths. Globed lampshades in gleaming steel. Stained-glass panels that shimmered and shifted in the light like a kaleidoscope. Even his can opener was a thing of beauty – cream-coloured, dimpled and rigged to the electrics, it looked more like a piece of vintage space-race technology than a humble household implement. There were times – standing motionless at the window gazing at the precisely manicured garden perhaps, or seated in one of the sumptuous leather chairs – when Bones couldn’t help feeling as though he was just another exhibit in the house, a kind of exquisite corpse.

Perhaps that was why he favoured food that dripped and bled and spattered. Carnal stuff that was anything but insubstantial and reminded him he was real. Liver. Tripe. Marrowbone. Trotters of lamb and pig. Sheep’s heads and shoulders and little piggies’ tails. Bones eating bones – the wordplay appealed to him.

He thought about breakfasting on a tin of potted salted and fermented sardines, neatly scythed open with that electric opener and eaten straight from the can. But it was too much, even for him.

Yet given how his day had started, he badly needed to indulge in some form of ritual. Besides, he was unquestionably hungry. From the larder he took a ready-sliced loaf and smeared two pieces with butter. From the fridge he removed the only thing in it, a single white truffle, shaved off twenty wafer-thin pieces with a blade made of Damascus steel, piled them onto one slice of bread, pressed the other slice on top and polished off the lot.

He’d just eaten 100 dollars’ worth of truffle in a manner calculated to upset almost anyone’s sense of decorum. He felt faintly ashamed but at the same time elated and ready, finally, for whomsoever he might cross swords with in the coming hours.

Heston Blumenthal
Chef, Bray
8:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
But the moment was fleeting. As the blood rushed to Bones’ gut, making him lightheaded, he felt a rising sense of panic.

What on earth should he wear??!! How should he look, what would he like people to think of him? It was, after all, his one and only day. He rifled through his closet for the perfect ensemble. Dapper Dan? Don Juan? Slick Rick? So many choices, so little time …

Afraid of making a fashion faux pas or being too flashy, he finally settled on his classic Harris Tweed. His confidence growing, he carefully plotted the rest of his outfit: navy argyle socks, a weathered pair of brogues, a polka dot bowtie, and a bright orange pocket square that he obsessively folded three times over to perfect precision. Effortlessly Handsome English Gentleman? He hoped so, he wanted to make a good impression and only had a short amount of time in which to do it.

Just as he left the house, the sky grew dark. As the heavens opened, he decided that turning his suit’s garment bag into a self-fashioned Mac was his only option. He couldn’t risk looking like a soggy sack of bones.
9:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Drawing the coat around him in the rain he ran to the café he frequented every morning at this time. It was a superior establishment with leather chairs and fashionable music. Bones stood at the bar, his coat dripping on the floor. The place was empty of course: nearly everyone had left the city since the proclamation, and those who remained could not afford to come here.

The barman acknowledged his presence with his shoulders, not his eyes. Like everyone else, he could not bear to look at Bones. But he knew what Bones wanted and he set to it without malice. Soon enough there were three teacups lined up on the bar. Each one was brimful of sake.

Bones picked up the first cup and put his head back. A moment of irritation – his jaw had started to creak when he opened his mouth – was forgotten as he poured the liquid over the ramshackle portcullis of his teeth. If he had had eyes, he would have closed them. Down his neck the viscous sake ran, pouring unseen inside the raincoat and scattering over his ribs. As it gushed through the hole of his pelvis he trembled again with pleasure. Alcohol stung his bones: it was faint, certainly, but just enough to transport him for an instant back to the kingdom of sensation.

His morning ceremony was soon over. Stepping over the puddle of sake he had left on the floor, Bones left the café.
10:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>TEN AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:01 AM</td>
<td>afterhours clubs close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:02 AM</td>
<td>stores unlock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:03 AM</td>
<td>people testify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:04 AM</td>
<td>scrimmages start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05 AM</td>
<td>buses crash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:06 AM</td>
<td>parades march</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:07 AM</td>
<td>press conferences convene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:08 AM</td>
<td>botanical gardens open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:09 AM</td>
<td>time to trade on the foreign exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10 AM</td>
<td>unveil a billboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:11 AM</td>
<td>execute a criminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:12 AM</td>
<td>go to church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:13 AM</td>
<td>Jan 14 2010, 10am: doomsday clock reset 1 minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:14 AM</td>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 AM</td>
<td>a 1 HOUR REPRIEVE from a mercurially narrated life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:16 AM</td>
<td>Feel free, ernesto to use this equipment to talk to us directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:17 AM</td>
<td>Egad here I am with a phone and a grid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:18 AM</td>
<td>PHONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:19 AM</td>
<td>electro-acoustic transducer to convert electric signals into sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20 AM</td>
<td>it is held over the ear ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:21 AM</td>
<td>the wall phone: No loose wires, please!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:22 AM</td>
<td>the doorphone: a stand-alone electronic communications system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:23 AM</td>
<td>intended for limited or private dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:24 AM</td>
<td>take two aspirin and call me in the morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25 AM</td>
<td>bi-directional transmission of clear speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:26 AM</td>
<td>traditional intercom systems are composed entirely of analogue electronics components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:27 AM</td>
<td>handset: telephone-style connection to an intercom station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:28 AM</td>
<td>holds both an earpiece and a push to talk microphone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:29 AM</td>
<td>found on trains, watercraft, aircraft and armoured fighting vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 AM</td>
<td>audio rorschach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:31 AM</td>
<td>cocteau's orphée mesmerized by a car radio that repeats coded messages -- and I have a handset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:32 AM</td>
<td>wha-wha-what did you say, huh? you're breaking up on me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:33 AM</td>
<td>the artifact presaging both the inventive and disruptive excess of its genius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:34 AM</td>
<td>smart phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:35 AM</td>
<td>ENTRY ZONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:36 AM</td>
<td>a laboratory - some would say an asylum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:37 AM</td>
<td>the entrance to his door is deceptively orderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:38 AM</td>
<td>the iconic english phone booth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:39 AM</td>
<td>GRIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40 AM</td>
<td>you can tell from this organized vantage that he's a cartesian kind of guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:41 AM</td>
<td>always liked a grid more than a list, the semi-colon or bullet point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:42 AM</td>
<td>the grid: a giant spread sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
frames work to separate what's in from what's out
boxes abound in diagrams, flow charts, networks
SURFACES
the electronics are embedded behind black vs. yellow tiles
mapping the boundary of technological convergence
a digital divide between the industrialized and developing worlds
SWITCHES, TOGGLES, ROCKERS, AND PUSH BUTTONS
A button is a trigger to make something else happen, to give or receive instructions ...
to know who is knocking at the door, to communicate by speaking as well as by ringing
push click touch
hello?
a plane could travel 16 kilometers from here to the serpentine pavilion in this minute
in a second, sound travels 343 meters
a 9mm bullet travels the same distance
the message has now traveled a kilometer
if anyone calls, I'm not home

11:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.

Jane Nisselson
Creative Director, New York
The dull thudding at the back of his head would not leave him. The cocktail strainer on the table was the smoking gun – evidence of the previous evening’s excesses. His tweed jacket lay crumpled on the floor next to a first class airline ticket, one orange sock and a pair of brown Trickers brogues. The Man Who Fell to Earth was playing on the TV screen, sound off. The soundtrack to A Clockwork Orange filled the room.

He picked up the airline ticket. Berlin ... tomorrow. Why would he go to Berlin? David Bowie appeared on the TV in the guise of an alien in search of water. Maybe this was a clue. Perhaps his trip to Berlin had something to do with water. He vaguely recalled making a business investment into a new research project involving artificial cloud formation. It had seemed like a good idea, because of the water shortages. A digital clock on the wall told him it was now 11.23am. The thudding in his head continued.

The crash of a timpani signalled the start of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, causing Bones to wince. Images from The Man Who Fell to Earth blurred and swam before his eyes. He swallowed a couple of tablets, dry, and walked to the bathroom. The hallway was white – white floorboards, white walls, white ceiling. Sections of the floor appeared to move, angling to the left and to the right, slowly moving like a ship at sea.

Had he commissioned an itinerant designer to sculpt the floor of the apartment? Why the fuck would I do that? Bones thought, as he stepped into the shower.

Ben Kelly
Interior Designer, London
12:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
There was not much time left. Out of the shower, and into the living room, where he kept his dwindling row of shirts and suits hanging from a portable clothes rail. He looked at the rack carefully, fingered the heavy textured tweed, the poplin, the rayon, glanced at the mirror, and then tried on the Comme des Garçons suit. It felt good.

Just half an hour left. In the taxi he thought about polishing his shoes, but decided against it, and concentrated instead on what he would be telling her. Should he soften her up with a compliment? Something about her hair – always a safe bet. No, better to get straight to the point.

Ten minutes ahead of schedule. Disaster. He hated being late, but getting to the Wolsey early was even worse. As the doormen let him in, he avoided the maitre d’ and went straight to the bar to order a martini: vodka, straight up with a twist of lemon. As he took his first sip, alcohol and ice combined to burn the back of his throat. It soothed him, but not enough to make the waiting any easier.

Deyan Sudjic
Museum Director, London
1:00 pm.
A day
in the life
of Ernesto Bones.
Ernesto Bones was aware that Madeline's desire to be punctual was deteriorating backwards. As the affair wore on she began to shave minutes off their agreed meeting time. Someday, a two o'clock lunch would mean a one-fifteen arrival. Bones despaired, but he knew Madeline perceived it as a virtue, and a combination of cowardice and affection made him reluctant to complain.

For their lunch, Bones had prepared pounded chicken breasts sautéed in a sauce of butter, white wine, capers and parsley, accompanied by mashed potatoes and peas. It was a meal he made often and effortlessly. The potatoes had finished their boil, the chicken was resting in a warm oven and a small pot of frozen peas were just simmering into a bright green that matched the illustration on the package.

He drained the potatoes and put them in a heated bowl with butter and milk. He opened a drawer and reached for his potato masher. It was gone.

Mr. Bones looked at his watch. He knew that he could only afford a minute or two to find the masher and mash the potatoes before the peas went from perky to dull, the crispy coating of the chicken turned soggy in the oven and Madeline arrived.

He did a thorough and efficient search for his potato masher. It was in none of the usual places. Had he loaned it to someone, was it stolen by the housekeeper, or thrown in the garbage in error? All plausible explanations, but in the end a waste of precious seconds.

Mr. Bones, a brilliant improviser who could unclog a pipe with a sock and a clothes hanger, cocked his head to one side as a signal to his brain to find a solution. It did, and he took another sip of the alcohol, a reward. His brain had told him to use his hand-held whisker to whisk his potatoes into a silky mash.

Mr. Bones opened his kitchen accessory drawer and withdrew the machine. He spun the handle a few times and thrust it into the potato cubes. But, like getting on a bicycle facing uphill, the opening strokes were difficult and required all of Mr. Bones' strength. A sensitive man, finely tuned to his instruments, he knew that too much force against the whisker's blades might bend them and make them useless.

Mr. Bones turned the handle slowly. The blades began to move again, gradually drawing in the potatoes. And then they stopped. He tried to move the handle, but the potatoes were locked in the blades. He placed the whisk...
against the side of the bowl, took another sip of the alcohol, cocked his head and waited.

This time nothing came. Like the potatoes, his brain was frozen. Not only did he not have a solution for mashing the potatoes, but he couldn’t remember why he was mashing potatoes.

He took another sip. The glass was empty. He glanced at the peas; they were already starting to lose their colour.

Mr. Bones cocked his head again. He felt a smile spreading across his face.

He picked up the whisk and turned the handle backwards towards himself. Gradually, the potato chunks loosened and dislodged themselves. He made a few turns forward and then a few turns backwards. The blades were moving easily now, spinning and churning the potatoes into a mash. He searched the bowl for stragglers, those lumps that had escaped the maw of the blades, and pounced on them till they were broken and folded into the mash.

He looked at the clock. Madeline was late.

Or was she simply not on time?

2:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.

Michael Elias
Scriptwriter, Los Angeles
Ernesto looked through the large window. The wind was blowing in the
trees, the branches were undulating very slowly, unusually slowly.

"Could Madeline be outside in this slow wind," he wondered, "could she
be making her way gently through this breeze, or hiding in the garden shed,
waiting for the slowness to stop?" Ernesto walked to the couch and let himself
fall into it. He’d always loved how he could trust the downy cushions to catch
him. This time, however, his fall seemed slower than usual, and his landing
even gentler. It felt odd, and left some space for apprehension, but he was
grateful he could savour this special moment of total abandon. He looked
around the room, everything was still, filled with silence. The clock showed
2:15 p.m., and that felt right. At least time is keeping its rhythm, he thought.

Something moved on the dinner table. He walked towards it. He walked
and walked. The distance felt much longer than before. He turned around and
realised he was only a few steps away from the couch, so he started running, all
the while staring at the clock. After a long minute, he finally got there. Straight
away he noticed the cocktail sticks on the surface of the dinner table. They
seemed more colourful than before; they were vibrant, living. They assembled
in the shape of a swirl. As he stared at the swirl, it started moving, slowly and
then fast. As it turned faster and even faster he got the distinct impression
that its colours were being injected into his eyes until, suddenly, everything
went dark. "Where am I?" he whispered. Was he expecting an answer? From
Madeline maybe? His body felt weightless and his arms were moving about
without much effort, as if caressing the air around him. He started making
out shapes in the darkness. He could see trees of various colours and sizes.

A friendly looking creature passed by. Its form was undefined, and it was
glowing—a lovely, blue, glowing dot. Soon it was out of sight, hidden behind
a bright green leafy bush, but he looked up and saw a few others moving
about like shooting stars in a circle. Each dot was a different colour, a different
intensity. Were they dancing? It could have been a ballet of vibrating auras.
He was taken by an uncontrollable urge to touch them, so he moved closer.
In a fraction of a second they vanished, and sucked him into their movement.
Unexpectedly he was surrounded by brightness. With squinty eyes he could see
his table, his couch, and his bookshelf. Madeline was standing in front of him,
smiling, her hair floating upward as if she was underwater. He tried to talk.
There was no sound. Instead, each word was replaced by a gigantic bubble
that rose into the air above his head and disappeared.
3:00 pm.  
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Ernesto picked up his trusty old paper knife and began waving it about him, trying to puncture this bag of wind before it escaped, but it was futile. He looked at the knife as though to find fault with it. It was a good knife, precise as a scalpel, honed on years of envelopes, white ones as well as brown. One sharp slit and the words spilled out like guts. ‘Dear Mr Bones’, they read, ‘It has come to our attention that your account is overdrawn, or your library book is overdue, or Sign Up Now for this unrepeatable offer. Dear Mr Bones, please get in touch with us at your earliest convenience ...’

Very rarely had he received any other sort of letter, the kind that began My Darling Ernesto or Ernesto dearest, light of my life. Only once, in fact. This very day. It had been sitting innocently on the hall table till now, and he took the opportunity – knife in hand – to open it. He sat in the chair by the window reading and re-reading it, over and over, first in consternation, secondly with alarm, thirdly with a feeling of helplessness, absently bouncing the flat of the blade on his knee, his mind unfocused. The minutes went by, the quarter-hour chimed and then the half-hour, and still he toyed with the knife, till inadvertently, and just as inevitably, he did himself a mischief with the blade, skewering the point through his trouser and stabbing himself in the leg. Blood trickled into his sock. He yelped, he swore, he did a little jig. But who was his unexpected, unasked-for and wholly unwelcome admirer? Finally, his past had caught up with him. Bones limped to the bathroom, in search of a bandage and the solace of liniment. His stalker was back.
4:00 pm. A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Bones left the bathroom and headed straight to the drawing room where he helped himself to a thimbleful of Russian vodka from his drinks cabinet. He put on a record on the player, poured another shot and cleared his mind.

It was something about the lineup of bottles – the clear and semi-clear vodkas, the labels with excruciatingly precise fonts and layouts, the reduction of colour – that enabled Bones to relax. His thoughts turned idly to Kazimir Malevich’s black square and the sound of John Cage’s musical work 4’33”. It was as if he was able to mechanically induce a state of mind whereby the narrative of the day ceased completely.

The hour slipped by in an almost entirely detached way. Some consider it ‘the long and lonely teatime of the soul’, but for Bones it was the perfect time of day. The clutter of the objects, thoughts and conversations that had surrounded him were diffused, all things figurative relaxed and his thoughts collapsed cleanly into the absolute.

Indeed, Ernesto Bones was shocked into abstraction.
5:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Ernesto’s insistent gurgling stomach dragged him from his reverie. A pot of tea and some of those little crispy lemon biscuits please, he thought, groggily. He was on his knees, which hurt, in a roomful of books – 60s and 70s hardback, he registered. Level with his head was a small table on which there were some coins, which he pocketed, and a table lamp. It was a fine-looking thing, with a handsome brushed stainless steel hemispherical shade, a bendy neck like a shower extension and an elegant white Bakelite base like an upside down trumpet. Very covetable. He let his eyes dwell on the lamp for some minutes, then almost drowsily, he stretched out to touch the soft/hard shade.

The burning heat caused him to leap up, thrust his fingers in his mouth, and wack the table so the light tumbled, slow-motion-car-crash-like, towards to the floor. Ernesto’s face pulled terrible involuntary grimaces as the bulb smashed, the armature twisted, and the base cracked into two clean pieces. Silence. His hot fingers throbbed, and for several minutes he tried to not look at the destruction that lay around his scuffed lace-ups. No one came.

Finally, he knelt to pick up the corpse of the lamp. If it hadn’t died, it would have fetched a fortune. He sighed. We could have made masterpieces, this light and me, me in a silk dressing-gown, or maybe a smoking jacket, it beaming its lovely calm light across my belles lettres, or my stark clever verses, or – why not? – my bestselling series for adolescents featuring a group of decaying yet sexy zombies (now there’s an idea). Now it would have to disappear.

He looked around for somewhere to stash it. He pulled a few of the books out at random – The Seige of Krishnapur going into his jacket pocket (JG Farrell was very much back in fashion). There was a nice deep recess behind them. Stroking the now dented but cool shade, he shoved the whole thing into the back of the bookshelf and replaced the books as best he could. Eventually he surveyed his work. The room was more or less as it had been.
6:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
This was something that pleased him: order and containment, each item laid out impeccably and in its rightful place. It all made sense in his mind.

Out the corner of his eye, a flickering light disturbed his reflections. Line 1 was alight. It was still his preferred mode of communication: he had no patience with his mobile phone, a bothersome necessity. Certainly he was not about to engage in the frivolity of the Internet. He communicated with the world on his terms.

He waited until the flashing ceased and went to take the phone off the hook. It rang just as he lifted the receiver. Irritated, he took a deep breath. 'Ernesto Bones!'

The line went dead.

He went back to his work, all the drawing plans lined up just so, only to realise that he had been given the wrong instructions. This put him in a precarious and risky position. How would he know where to meet the others? How would he know who they were?

The best way to deal with the problem was to get the airport, and fast. He rifled through the drawer that contained his passports, but he needed to remember which one he should use.

The other plans were trapped safely between the frame and the carefully mounted photograph underneath the stairwell. Hurriedly he collected up the assignment papers, rolled them into his travel bag and proceeded towards the spiral stairs for the telephone.

Shelley Fox
Fashion Designer, New York
7:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
As he approached the phone, it rang.
He picked it up and placed it next to his ear.
He awaited instruction.

The voice was unexpected.
The floor dropped from under him.

He steadied himself,
Hinge joints bent.

He set about gathering,
All things white.
White paper untouched by ink,
A chaste tulle veil.
Pearl dust,
Damp porcelain.
Curling steam,
Sugar,
Snow crystals.

Under a white light he spun, stitched, starched,
kneeded, polished, powdered and painted.

And there was formed a perfect cluster of petals.
Not an ordinary flower.

One without stamen, style or stigma.
Without stem or thorn.
No ovule or pollen would it discharge.
No thirst had it, nor would it turn its head to the sun.
Coated, frozen, embalmed.
It was never to wither, nor to rot, nor to gather a mark.
It was cold to touch, and heavy.

He arranged his flower carefully.
He closed his trap door.

He waited,
Cloaked in sweet perfume.
8:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Bugger this he thought, his stomach rumbling. Something steadying is required; the dying flowers are making him slightly sick. He emerged through the trap door.

A cold roast partridge in the fridge and a piece of cheddar would put him back on track. A glass or two of Burgundy all helped down by slugging in the Mies Van Der Rohe chairs round the dining table. He starts to wonder how many times you would have to slugger until the chair's steel frame would give way. Not the night to attempt such a thing.

After a small digestive (his favourite Fernet Branca, a bitter brew), he took out a cigarette, not entirely sure whether he smoked or not, but it seemed a good idea to try.

As it happened, he smoked two more, musing on the fact that his home was full of open galleries. When he was downstairs and looked up at the gallery, there was no one there to wave to or beckon down to join him, and when he went up the stairs there was no one to look down on. However fast he ran up and down the stairs the situation did not improve. Another glass of Fernet Branca helped a little.

Spending too much time by himself, as the night drew in, his thoughts turned to merriment and carousing.

Fergus Henderson
Chef, London
9:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
“Carousing” he said, toasting his reflection in the window.

“Caroooonnsing. Yes, we caroused. We made merry – often with liquor – we boozed, we drank, we frolicked, we went on a spree. We had fun, imbibed, painted the town red, played, quaffed, raised Cain, reveled, rioted, roistered, wassailed and positively whooped it up. And thus we were not sad nor did we grieve. Together we beat the drum.”

Shuddering slightly from his drink’s stinging pungency, Bones drained his glass. “One is all right, two is too many, three is not enough.” She liked to tease him about his drinking and had a penchant for taking other people’s phrases (Thurber? On the martini?) and making them her own. From inside the cabinet Bones pulled out his old Ferrograph recorder – ‘built like tank!’ – and a tape marked ‘Julia – Generation X.’ Clicking the reel into place, he pressed play.

“I know I could take an easier path, be a teacher, a banker, go to law school. But being an artist is all I’ve wanted. You knows? It may be fifteen years before I get my first show. There’s going to be a lot of work between now and then that won’t seem to go anywhere. But it’s a different system of rewards to other careers. You don’t get the raise or the promotion. You have to keep working, almost to the point of craziness. I just hope that I can persevere. Because I can’t imagine living without it.”

The voice was girlish yet earnest. The knowing irony, that catch in the back of the throat, had yet to enter her voice. But even then she seemed sure of herself. Bones looked at the picture above his desk: an aeroplane about to crash into a skyscraper. It was one of a several photographs of planes on the verge of disaster that she’d taken in summer 2001. The exhibition opened on September 10th. Within a week the gallery had closed it down. On bad days Julia thought that her images had caused the ensuing disaster.

The pictures, the tapes – all were his now. Yes, he missed her. But would he have her back? Go through it all again and risk losing her once more? Not when he had all this. Alone in his study, the single light enveloping him in warmth, safe with memories that could not hurt him now.
10:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Bones was distracted by the sound of water. Bath time. He rarely took to the tub before midnight, but today had been so disjointed he felt in need of soporific watery distraction. He looked wistfully at the shiny orange make-up bag with the big white Mary Quant flower. There were reminders of her speckled around the room.

Bones tried to lose himself in his favourite bath game: selecting an ideal bathing companion. Usually they were chosen according to his mood: combatative, erotic, philosophical, epicurean, loquacious ... Recent imaginary companions had included Genghis Khan (quarrelsome), Anita Ekberg (most satisfying), and the newspaperman at the corner of the street (Bones had often wondered what was behind his surly demeanour). But today it just didn't work; he couldn't banish her from his mind.

Irritated, he immersed himself instead in the practicalities of the bath. Bones was a self-confessed hydrophiliac. He considered bathing a sacred ritual and had spent much time concocting the transcendental bathing experience. His recipe began with the water. He dreamt of having his own hot spring – he thought he might call it Ernest-eau – but for the moment he had to make do with rainwater collected from the roof. Afterwards, it would be filtered and drained into his vegetable patch.

Next, the tub. Bones had an inordinate fear of the standard cast iron bathtub. It reminded him uncomfortably of a coffin. His large rectangular bath was made from hinoki, Japanese Cypress wood, and gave off a wonderful aroma reminiscent of walking in a forest after the rain.

Bones liked the water hot, very hot indeed. And he stayed soaking until it became almost unbearable. The Japanese had a word for it: ‘Yudedako’ or ‘boiled octopus’. It describes the livid pink/brown hue of the bather’s flesh at that combustible moment when steamy heat conspires to relax the muscles and free the mind – the bather’s nirvana. This put him in a calm frame of mind to face the last great task of the day ...
11:00 pm.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Relaxed now, Ernesto knew he would have to play his 8-track version of *Simply Streisand* or he would not be able to sleep. It helped him to remember.

Remembering always started with their first proper evening out together. They had been more than a little awkward and formal with one another at first, but *Funny Girl* had been a good choice, although he had feared it was too obvious. From that moment, Streisand had provided the score for the months they spent together, if together was the right word.

Though *Funny Girl* was their first outing, it felt like the middle of a relationship that had grown over a period of months from glances, to exchanged smiles, to brief greetings. As his confidence grew, he offered a few conversational gambits about flowers and plants, vegetables and compost, before finally working up his nerve to invite her to meet him in town. He booked tickets and bought a new shirt (perhaps a little too young for him), arrived at the theatre (too early) and then had the pleasure of watching his companion (clearly nervous and very, very smart) arrive.

Away from the garden, they were unsure of what to say to one another, but Barbra had been funny and they had laughed and afterwards had been easier. What followed was a year of conversations and outings, and his garden had never looked better.

He wasn’t sure if the arrival of *Simply Streisand* was simply a reminder of their time together or an offer of more. He hadn’t yet made the call that could resolve the matter, and he really wasn’t sure he would; he was no longer so excited by the difference between them.

Barbra would understand.
12:00 am.  
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
But oh, the times they had. The way they were. It was midnight now, and that vile old nag—regret—was starting to sink in. He’d told himself that he wouldn’t let this happen, that he’d always push forward and never look back. But how many other promises had he made and then broken, how many other—”Stop it, Ernesto,” he muttered, as if anyone was listening.

No. He was not that Ernesto Bones anymore. He was through being the sad sack who would pick up the phone but not make the call, the has-been who always stopped short of the finish line, the dud who ... blew that contest all those years ago. Remember that, Ernesto? It had started out so well. So well! “Sea World’s the World for Me.” He’d come up with that little ditty himself, and for that the radio announcer sent news across the airwaves that Ernesto was headed to sunny San Diego. Six days, five nights, all expenses paid—and most of all, a shot at riding Shamu. Imagine that. The entire world would be watching!

Ernesto saw his chance to prove his mettle, to show he was a man of the people. He prepared for months, cutting back on shortbread and puddings, and practicing his stance for maximum impact in a wetsuit. He rehearsed his lines: “Why should I be nervous? Orcas are lovely creatures—friends to man, and deserving of our protection.” But when the moment finally came—with the crowds cheering, the cameras flashing, with all eyes on him—Ernesto did what he did so often: He froze. His mind shut down, his body seized up. They had to carry him off the platform—or so the next day’s papers said.

Pouring himself a drink, Ernesto was determined to rectify the cowardice of his past, to undo the shame of that afternoon so long ago when, glistening like a shark, he shriveled like an anchovy. Tonight, he would redeem himself, maybe even make history.

Arie Chen  
Design Critic, Beijing
1:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Atop the piano was a reel-to-reel magnetic tape recorder. He depressed the faulty forward button until it jammed in place, activating its brave motor; a microscopic sigh of pride escaped his lips. Not even the most thrifty servant could replicate this sleight of hand.

The reel-to-reel’s crackling loudspeaker ebbed gloriously into life, emitting the exotic sounds of an old field recording captured during a thwarted folly in the Guyanan jungle.

He gently flipped back the lid on the ancient Leipzig, drew a short smoky breath, started the metronome, and began hitting a single, sustained low C, striking the yellowed enamel with the inside of his left thumb at 10 second intervals. Twenty minutes elapsed and he added a second note, two octaves higher, this time with the outside of his right thumb, pedals pushed relentlessly towards the stubborn floor.

A further forty minutes passed, and by that point he had almost imperceptibly altered the tempo, introducing an array of minute and deliberate variations and releasing a number of deafening shrieks. There was not so much as a murmur from the nocturnal populace. A magic lantern, perched nobly behind the piano, shone arcane collages of increasing intensity onto the back wall; human meeting animal eyes, collapsing buildings, uncanny beasts, a monochrome sun breaking mercilessly through the forest canopy.

With the late night set’s gin-addled powers on the wane, at the stroke of 2 o’clock, without anticipation, he slammed the lid shut: “crack”, followed by a low, discordant hum.

Ernesto reached, once more, for his unforgiving relic of a pistol.
2:00 am. A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
To take stock: he knows the box balanced on the arm of his chair is stacked heavy with lines, the coloured columns of chips offering raw material for a strategy, an exit? ‘Don’t gamble away your last chance, Bones,’ he thinks. ‘It’s almost 3.00am.’

When the proposition was first put forward so long ago the odds appeared even. His objects are now in disarray, their language manipulated by chance encounters with unknown souls. Who are they to lay these bones down before the chips are played?

Summoning his wits, he flips open his notebook, writes out an obvious end-game and double-checks his calculations. From the open box he extracts a stack of black, thinks twice, swaps to yellow stakes with two red for good luck. He orders the table, places the open notebook next to the pistol and glances at his watch. Was the door ajar? Chips fall through his fingertips into neat piles and are casually counted. Distraction spreads across his face. He takes three black, puts them in an envelope and hides it under the cushion of his chair. A futile superstition, he thinks, but we cannot help ourselves.

Drawing breath, he gathers words from his notebook to quiet those inside his head, reminded that he is about to face the most important negotiation of his life. Ernesto contemplates a short nap. ‘What is the time?’ he thinks. ‘I am ready and I can feel them bearing down on me.’
3:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
At that moment the clock struck three: Ernesto went under the bed covers for a nap and immediately started dreaming of Ossian's poems and those of the Latin poet Lucan, poems that spoke about cemeteries and the dead. He had the impression they were dedicated to him (Bones) and he woke up feeling as if he were buried in a coffin underground ...

It was the result of the overdoses of amphetamine, heroin, benzodrine and methedrine, drugs he'd been on since he was a child, so he wasn't particularly scared. On the contrary, being buried alive filled him with a sense of safety and security when compared to the world of the living, as the living usually kicked him in the face.

This sense of deathly well-being was brutally interrupted by the clock tower ruthless striking four ... He got up, covered in cold sweat and started gathering the clothes scattered all over the room, in order to get ready for this damn meeting. He tried to recall at least his personal data, but he wasn't sure of himself and his history ... He searched, to no avail, beneath the furniture and under the bed for his trousers and his underwear; he had probably left them in the lift ... He decided it wasn't worth the while to get stressed and prepared to leave the house half naked. Outside, a freezing dawn was beginning to corrupt the night and pollute the streets.
4:00 am. A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
Before stepping across the threshold into the dishwater gray world outside, Ernesto presses every switch on the panel in the vestibule.

Gallery spots, on.
Dressing room 1, on.
Pool, on.
Terrace floods, garden lights, sculpture base, on, on, on.

Light pours from the glass façade of his house, bathing the entire street in a yellow glow. The steel-framed structure and the gardens that surround it shine like a modernist beacon, standing in stark contrast with the neighbours' neatly trimmed hedges and Gothic eaves. Ernesto imagines lace curtains twitching up and down the street as the local dowagers rouse and try to see what the latest fuss is all about. He pulls a pair of Wellingtons and a fur coat against the cold, and steps onto the front stoop.

A fox stands in the front garden, blinking in the sudden glare. Ernesto stares; he wonders whether the fox has ever rummaged through his garbage, dug up his flowerbed or interrupted his sleep with its barking.

In the fox's presence, Ernesto begins to relax. He likes her narrow snout and the vertical slits of her eyes. He is quite pleased with his new-found connection with nature. New business idea, he thinks. Spend time with foxes, and your cares will melt away. Fox-guided meditation, Fox hypnosis.

Under the fox's spell, Ernesto's memory of the day begins to come back: drinking; entertaining wild delusions; wallowing in painful memories of the past. A letter. An unwelcome guest. Drinking, again, and heavily.

Something is wrong; a piece of Ernesto's day is missing – omitted, in fact. Ernesto steps back into the house. The spell broken, the fox takes refuge in a nearby stand of bamboo. There is something that he had not wanted his neighbours to see – a guilty secret. Like a drunken fool, he had flooded it with light.

Perhaps it isn't too late. Perhaps the neighbours are still asleep. Suddenly anxious about his transparent life, Ernesto switches off the lights: perimeter, terrace floods, pool ... He furtively makes his way back through the now-gloomy house to the back garden. Shrubs spatter his bare knees with cold dew. He opens the pool gates.

The world is drained of colour in the early morning light, but Ernesto can already see that the blue water has turned a deep scarlet. A figure is drifting face down in the pool: it is his stalker.

Michael Connor
Curator, New York
5:00 am.
A day in the life of Ernesto Bones.
He knew how it all began, but seemed incapable of stopping it. 
How he wondered had he come to push that green button marked 'start'.

The last 23 hours had battered his emotions. Draining him of meaning and energy. Sadly, his magic box didn’t have a pause button. Only ‘on-off’. Is that all this world offers? No pause, no reflection, no possibility for improvement. Just the grinding progress of time. The tick tock of the inevitable. If this was existence it left much to be desired.

His feet grew soggy as he approached the pools edge. Why is water always so wet, he wondered, as the cold seeped in to his leather lined boots.

Why does he need to know the identity of his stalker? He’ll never meet him again, his stalking days are over. He assumed it was a he. Aren’t men always stalkers? It comes to them so naturally. Hunter gatherers, wishing to own everything they touch.

His hand caught the drifting figure by its coat. Despite the wet, the cold and hesitation, this coat felt familiar. He didn’t like it and shivered momentarily. That ‘off’ button suddenly seemed enticingly attractive. One simple stab of the finger and this story would be all over. But not just yet.

The floating stalker drifted closer to Ernesto as his hand pulled the familiar coat toward him. It was then that the body spun round in the scarlet seeped water. Ernesto staggered back in shock as he peered at the face. His own face. He was his stalker.