

Leavetakings

PERSONAL EFFECTS ACCOUNTING DOCUMENT - FORMER RESIDENT

I hereby declare that:

1. I have been a resident of another country for at least one year.[†]
2. I have been continuously absent from Canada for at least one year.
3. I left Canada on August 13th, 1997; and
4. I returned to Canada to resume residence on September 10th, 2023.[‡]
5. All goods imported are my personal or household effects and were not used abroad for any commercial purpose nor will they be used in Canada for any commercial purpose.
6. If any item is sold or otherwise disposed of in Canada within 12 months of the date of its importation, I will notify a CBSA Office of such fact and pay all duties owing at the time.[¥]

Importer's Name: Erik Naydiuk

Importer's Address: An apartment I have only seen online, but am reasonably sure actually exists, just north of downtown Victoria, British Columbia.

Item	Description of Goods	Value
1.	Baby Blanket. Sky blue images of rabbits and pine trees set against a pastel yellow background. The blanket is so old now its two colors are becoming hard to tell apart. Its edges are frayed and the cloth is rough. I remember being small enough to lie beneath it with room to spare; now, it's barely big enough to cover my lap. When I first crossed this border, I was going south into the US. I kept the blanket close to me for the whole cramped and miserable drive. It became damp with tears and melted orange and purple from the popsicles my mother periodically pulled from a cooler for my brothers and me to keep our body	Unknown.

[†] I've lived in the United States for twenty-five years; to me, Canada is "another country."

[‡] I left as the veil across the face of American tyranny began to fall, as its liberal opposition revealed itself as inept and unconcerned.

[¥] I will not be doing this.

	temperatures down since our truck had no air conditioning. We were on our way to Portland, Oregon because my dad's job had transferred him, which sounded like frivolous nonsense to my six-year-old brain. I was inconsolable when my parents told me that my best and only friend would not be moving with us. This was the first significant departure in my life, the first time I understood how big the word "goodbye" could be.	
2.	<i>Star Wars</i> Blu-ray box set. The original six films, these editions from before the Disney takeover. My mom introduced them to us when I was in fourth grade because they were favorite movies of her youth, and they became my refuge, a place to hide from my parents' explosive arguments as it became clearer and clearer that they'd grown to irreconcilably hate one another. <i>Star Wars</i> provided me with a fantasy through which I could leave behind the unbearable realities that were unfolding at home, a wide and boundless universe in which adults were brave and heroic and cared for each another even if the adults I knew best had none of these qualities. For years, we were only allowed to watch the original and <i>The Empire Strikes Back—Return of the Jedi</i> was forbidden because of Princess Leia's revealing gold bikini. This image, my parents decided, would have a corrupting effect on the minds of their innocent young sons. For some reason, the restriction was lifted when we hit puberty, and when I finally watched it, eager first to find out how the story ended and second to see what all the fuss over this bikini was about, I was confused. I felt nothing. What had my parents been so keen to shelter me from? She was just a lady on TV. I wouldn't understand for years what it meant that my mind always wandered back to the training sequence in <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>, when Luke swung through the jungle on vines in a sleeveless top, his muscular arms rippling and coated with sweat. I wonder what my parents would have done if they had known about this proclivity. Would <i>any</i> movies featuring <i>any</i> bodies have been banned? How would	\$70CAD

	they have dealt with a teenage boy who didn't want what a teenage boy should want?	
3.	Kitchen supplies. Cheap pots and pans, a plastic cutting board, various spices. Spatulas and a ladle. Mostly purchased at the grocery store down the road from my first apartment on Portland's West Side. I taught myself to love cooking when I lived there. My mother cooked all the time, but I didn't learn any recipes from her because by the time I was old enough to be interested, she was no longer a part of my life. No longer sharing movies and memories from her own childhood that brought us closer, no longer passing me popsicles over the backseat of a sweltering pickup. Sometimes I am tempted to tell people she abandoned me when I came out, but the alcoholic truth is so much less interesting: I left her before I had acknowledged to anyone but myself that I was gay, and it was because I was no longer willing to compete with Chardonnay (or beer or Listerine) for her love. Sometimes I still miss the blueberry cream cheese dessert she used to make in the summer, or the sausage chowder we always asked for when the weather started to cool, but only sometimes. I like my food better.	\$200CAD
4.	Bible, New International Version. The book that drew borders around the first 25 years of my life. I've had this same copy since the days I still believed in it. I found genuine religious ecstasy in its thin, silver-lined pages, but as I grew older and into my forbidden attractions, it was warped into a vessel of shame and suffering. Black leather brick thrown from the pulpit. When I came out, I left my faith and with it, what I assumed were lifelong communities and friendships that I had formed at church, at Bible camp, on mission trips overseas. There were no dramatic confrontations about theology or morality; most people just went quiet. Their silence hurt more than an argument or denunciation would have; if they had tried to keep me there, at least I would have known that they cared. I think about those I left behind every time I	Complicated.

	glimpse the Bible in its dusty corner at the bottom of my bookshelf, and I wonder if they ever think of me.	
5.	A's hoodie. Heavy, gray, designer, expensive. I kept it after we broke up, not quite a year after our first date. I left the rest of my life behind for him—didn't see friends for months at a time, stopped hiking, didn't pick up pen or paper or even a book. It didn't matter. I was breaking all the rules I'd ever been taught about who my body was for, who my heart was for, who my life was for, and contradictory to every zealous belief that had been indoctrinated into me, I was happier than I knew was possible. In hindsight, we were never compatible, but I told myself that if I loved him hard enough, he could be persuaded to love me back. I see now that this was a manipulation. In trying to force him to love me in the way that I wanted him to, I refused to see him for who he was and disregarded his emotional reality. When he inevitably pushed me away and waited for me to end what I had convinced myself we were building together, my happiness shattered, and I no longer knew who I was. Neither of us were good for one another, but he was my first love and my first heartbreak, at almost 30 years old. Leaving him saved us both from years of suffering, but why am I always the one who has to leave?	\$350CAD
6.	Wall art. I bought most of these after I left A, during the height of Covid, when I wasn't going on dates or to movies or seeing my friends. My walls were (and will be again) adorned with prints of mountains and birds and robots and candy, astronauts and skeletons, posters of National Parks, a neon sunset, and—my favorite—a framed Levertov poem, deeply sad and printed only a few times, about the destruction of desert land during nuclear tests. Decorating my home was a revelation after the ecstasy and devastation of A; I learned that I can fill my own life with beautiful things. Every time I move I'm scared to leave what I've built for myself, and every time I hang these pictures up in a new	\$400CAD

	apartment I am reminded that my home is what I bring with me, not what I leave behind. The frames are delicate and awkward to pack; some of them are expensive. They are a pain in the ass to transport and I am never getting rid of them.	
7.	US Green Card. My permission slip for living in the US these past 25 years. In 2016, I considered applying for US citizenship. It would be a way to claim a home, to plant my proverbial flag in the land where my friends were, where my brothers and their families were, where I'd gone to school and dreamed of building a career and falling in love someday. After Trump lost the election in 2020—after years of children in cages, of near-nightly protests, of masked agents abducting people from the streets of Portland—I thought we were past the worst of it. But more cages were built, more children interred, and within two years the Supreme Court struck down Roe v. Wade and suggested that their eyes were on queer rights and interracial relationships next. All that had changed was the colour on the electoral map. I made my decision to leave for Canada within the year. How strange to be leaving the country to escape the same forces that drove me out of the church. How strangely, terribly, lucky to be a gay immigrant with a safe home country to return to.	\$550USD
8.	<i>Incredible thoughts: A book of poetry by Charlotte.</i> Written by my niece, accompanied by hand-drawn illustrations. Very serious topics: ice cream, animals, art, “Unkle Erik.” She gave it to me for Christmas the year before I left. She’s eight now and growing up so fast she seems like a different person every time I see her. The day I packed my life into the UHaul trailer I told her father—my brother—that a chapter in our lives that had felt like the whole book until that moment was closing. It won’t be long before federal agents return, this time wearing masks, to seize people off the streets of my hometown as greedy and	Incalculable.

	violent eyes turn northward. I don't know when I'm going back to visit. I don't know when I'll see my family again.	
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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

I am practiced in departure, but today I'm learning to return. Just off the ferry in Victoria, I hand a copy of my inventory form to the customs agent. He glances at it for maybe thirty seconds before handing it back. He asks if I have any firearms (no) or cannabis products (yes, but I tell him no). "Welcome home," he says, and waves me through. The fortress of the Olympic Mountains looms dark and tall in my rearview mirror as I drive north through downtown, pondering what it means to arrive.

A week after I unpack, I am walking beside the inner harbour, and I see a crowd gathered on the lawn in front of the Legislative Assembly building, the seat of BC's government. A woman is speaking into a microphone, denouncing "gay and transgender ideology," and declaring that it needs to be removed from schools to protect "our" children. I have heard it all before; I've been hearing it all my life. Just not here, until now. Counter-protesters dot the lawn, and the rainbow and pink-and-blue pastel hues of pride flags are everywhere. The dissenters outnumber the idealogues, but for how long will that matter? After awhile, I walk back toward my apartment, into a wall of blinding sunlight that bounces off the water and makes it hard to see. Where will I go when there is nowhere left to run?