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Herndon, Virginia 20171

November 30, 2016

Mr. Jacob Hansen
1300 Eighth Street Southwest
Mount Vernon, Iowa 52314

Nephew,

Your mom tells me that you've been furious at yourself. I'm sure you've had good-hearted people telling you to go easy on yourself, that accidents happen, that...

Fools, the lot of 'em. Yes, dammit, be angry with yourself! Being angry with yourself is good. It's healthy. It shows you understand what happened and what a colossal fool you were. Anger isn't a bad emotion, Jacob, it just often gets put to bad ends. Using it to make yourself a better man is noble. Using it to punish yourself is folly.

Jacob, without exception, every man¹ I know has a long and sordid history of falling flat on his face. I do, your father does, and oh my, the stories I could tell you about your grandfather. Every man you meet fits into one of two categories: the ones who own the fact we're our own worst enemies, and the ones in denial.

But you can be your best ally, too.

There's a tale about an Apache wise man who was teaching his son about life. "Son," he said, "in every man two wolves, Good and Evil, fight for his soul."

His son asked, "Which is stronger?"

The Apache wise man answered, "The one he feeds."

Your anger is food for your wolves, nephew. Feed wisely.

Lovingly,

¹"Every woman, too!" I can hear your mother say. The language sounds prettier if I use just one gender. But yes, every woman, too.