

PROJECT G

Same fire, shorter time.

A deck for the dark stretches,
the fog, and the gaps
between people.

HOW TO USE IT

Draw one when you are stuck, or deal the fog cards before a decision that smells urgent.

WHAT IS ON THE BACKS

The words of the person who wrote it, their date, and what it means now. Cards marked *Our reading* are ours, not theirs.

THE HONEST PART

The alchemists were mostly doing chemistry. Reading their work as a map of the inner life mostly begins in 1850. We borrow it anyway, and say so.

MORE

claude.ai/code/artifact/49c976f2-53f0-47db-9cfb-c393c6af0009

It starts black

The dark part is the
beginning of the work, not
proof you failed.

The beginning of our work is the Black Raven, which, like all things that are to grow and receive life, must first putrefy.

Attributed to Edward Kelly · printed 1676

Every account of the work starts here. Nobody skipped it.

If it never goes black

Nothing that never went
dark ever changed.

*if it be not black, proceed no
further, for it is unrecoverable*

Aurifontina Chymica, London · 1680

A hard stretch you refuse to enter
tends to wait for you.

Ordinary material

What you start from is close
by, cheap, and easy to
despise.

It is familiar to all men, both young and old, is found in the country, in the village, in the town, in all things created by God; yet it is despised by all.

Gloria Mundi, dated in the text · 1526

You don't need better raw material than the life you already have.

Separate

Sort the feeling from the story you're telling about it.

*Seperate thou ye earth from ye
fire, ye subtile from the gross
sweetly wth great indoustry.*

The Emerald Tablet, translated by Isaac
Newton · c. 1680

Sweetly. It's sorting, not scouring.

An easy fire first

Start gentle. Heat comes
later, once you can take it.

*as the Infant in the beginning is
nourished with light meats, but
the bones being strengthened
with stronger: so this mastery
also, first it must have an easy
fire*

Attributed to Roger Bacon, English edition ·
1597

Most people try to fix everything
at once, and burn the batch.

Haste ruins it

If you can't wait, don't start.

*he who has no patience, let him
refrain his hands from the work*

Rosarium philosophorum · 1550

Urgency is the most reliable sign
that someone is being worked on
— including by yourself.

One hour

Don't let one bad hour throw away months of work.

*it would be foolish to let one
hour rob you of the fruits of all
your labour.*

Eirenaeus Philalethes, written · 1645

Send it tomorrow. Say it
tomorrow. It keeps.

Don't hand it the hatchet

Keep the feeling. Don't give it your hands.

*In my fury I tooke a Hatchet in
my hand, And brake all my
Worke ... The Crowes head
began to appeare as black as Iett*

Thomas Charnock · 1557

Nine months of work, smashed in a rage at the moment it began to turn. The war was out of his hands; the hatchet was in them.

Same fire, shorter time

The second time through the same trouble is quicker than the first.

The Second work is concocted as the First, in the same or a like Vessel, the same Furnace, and by the same degrees of fire, but is perfected in a shorter time.

Jean d'Espagnet · 1623

He meant a chemical process, not a life. We're borrowing it — and it holds up.

The first round is the hard one

It gets easier. It does not start
easy.

*In this first section of our work,
nothing is to be done without
hard and persevering toil*

Eirenaeus Philalethes, written · 1645

Later rounds were called child's play by people who had done the first.

Back through the black

Shorter isn't the same as
skipped.

*The Crows head will be blacker,
the Dragons Blood redder, the
Lac virginis whiter*

J. R. Glauber, English edition · 1689

Each round goes through the dark
again, sometimes darker. It just
takes less time.

Count the days

Mark the day it starts and the day it lifts. That number is the thing you're shortening.

Our reading, not a source

You can't shorten a cycle you have never measured. One mark a day is enough: in it, turning, clear.

Deceived by the deceived

The person pushing it was
usually fooled first.

*Take heed that you be not
deceived by them that are
deceived.*

Henry Cornelius Agrippa, in a letter of · 1527

Most manipulation is second-
hand. That makes it no less
expensive.

Greed is the handle

What they hook is something you already wanted.

*To the Covetous, an easie way
without Expence: To the Hasty,
Rash and Unstable, multiplicity
of Distillations.*

A Short Enquiry concerning the Hermetic Art,
London · 1714

The adepts wrote traps for greedy readers on purpose. Ask what want of yours is being used.

Name your evidence first

Decide what would change
your mind before you're in
the room.

*compassing almost the whole
world, met with none but
impostors, false deceivers, and no
philosophers ... at length I found
the truth*

John Pontanus · 1600

He also admitted erring two
hundred times. Doubt plus
persistence, not cynicism.

Sleep on it

Anything sold as urgent that
can wait an hour can wait a
night.

*The World hath been much
abused by the Opinion of
Making of Gold ... the Meanes
(hitherto propounded) ... full of
Errour and Imposture*

Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum* · 1627

Tomorrow you'll read the same
offer with different eyes.

Ask, don't imagine

Picturing their side doesn't
work. Asking does.

getting another person's perspective directly, through conversation, increased accuracy but ... perspective taking did not

Eyal, Steffel & Epley, 25 experiments · 2018

Then write down what they said, in their words, not your summary of it.

The gap is smaller

They dislike you about half as much as you think.

*think that the levels of prejudice
... held by the outgroup party
are approximately twice as
strong as actually reported*

Moore-Berg et al., PNAS · 2020

And when people are shown the real figure, they judge the other side less harshly.

The lamp ahead

Somebody went first with a light you couldn't see. Later that's you.

*In all thy wandering in
Darkness, the lamp of the Kerux
went before thee, though it was
not seen by thine eyes.*

Golden Dawn, Neophyte ceremony · c. 1888

The Kerux is the one who carries
the lamp. It is a job, not a rank.

The vessel before the fire

If the extremes run hot fast,
build the container first:
sleep, ground, people, help.

The aim of moral discipline is to purify the heart from the rust of passion and resentment, till, like a clear mirror, it reflects the light of God.

al-Ghazali, The Alchemy of Happiness · c. 1105

Not killing the passion. Cleaning the rust off it. If the dark is too much right now, tell someone today — in the US, call or text 988.