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Image by Kirsten Cooke and Melanie Jackson, *Snow Crash*, 2018, Gift, featuring Pii & Galia Kollektiv, *The Decision-Maker Does Not Anticipate*, 2017 and Tai Shani, *I Am Paradise*, 2017

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I'm not a raisin, just an apprehensive M&M

Hey guys... Here's a post I never thought I'd be writing on this blog. A moment of both deep sadness and huge excitement that only a new life challenge can bring. In fact, I can't believe I'm typing these words and you may not believe them yourself but they're true. Deep breath, here goes.

Today, is my last day at Google.

Yep. I know. I can't even begin to describe how weird it is to write this down. For those of you who have followed this humble blog, this will have come as quite a blow. But believe me when I say this; Not as much as it was to me! My wife, my kids and I did a lot of soul searching and faced with a new opportunity decided it was for the best.

So why the big move? Well, leaving google isn't easy as I'm sure you can imagine. It's not been without a few tears I'm not ashamed to say. It's like leaving the best family you could ever imagine or hope for. But the truth is I have another family to think about. And we'll be moving from here to San Jose, California, where I'll be taking on an exciting role with Cisco Systems. The last 6 years in Europe have been an absolute privilege and to all the Googler's reading this I just want to say thank you. But California (and their raisins) calls and it's brought a few parting thoughts forward that I want to share. Your thoughts, as always, are most welcome. Your feedback means a lot, guys.

Before I face the big(ish) city, I have to face an even bigger challenge: What's my new professional identity now I'm not at Google (sob/sniff)? No longer being a Googler means a new chapter not only in my career, but also in myself. A Googler's more than just a word, it's who I am! At Google, we talked of being 'overworked in a good way'. The old cliché of looking after the 'work-life balance' was a tiresome insult in all honesty. Our expertise and flair was forged in the lively and fluid space of a productive life, making no distinction from 'work'. I'm pretty sure this isn't the norm at other companies and I may have to dial it down and just observe the Cisco culture for a while. Take it in, let my Cisco-self emerge. Breath in, Breath out. It will take time but I'll get there, guys. Hey.. what does a Cisco employee call themselves anyway? I'm not even sure.. But in all seriousness, these questions persist. 1.How can I successfully extract my google-self from the context of my work at Google? 2.I have a lot to offer but can I deliver it outside of the context that nurtured my talents? 3.How will I feel imparting this approach on my new colleagues? And 4.Will they be open to the benefits? Only time will tell. (Maybe there are questions I've missed so do comment below).

One thing I do know going forward is that while Google's long shadow has defined my experience, in the process I've acquired a tremendous amount of knowledge from which to draw. I also know I'm no ordinary 'knowledge worker' but an original 'smart creative' (don't cry again dammit). Flexibility is in Google's (and therefore my very own) DNA. I've been encouraged to take risk, to improve from failure (fail well), if anything it's in our nature to jump head first, right? 'Ask the hard questions', 'think not work', 'beware the bobblehead' (yes men to you), and don't always listen to the HiPPOs (Highest Paid Persons Opinion). This incredible philosophy has set me up for life. It's stuff I apply on a daily basis both at work and at home. They truly moulded me into 'the internet century's new animal'. This is something I know I will take with me to Cisco as I head up the Tailored Access Operations (TAO) teams (more on how that pans out in my next post). But don't worry guys, I'll also be reporting back on San Jose's best food and drink as usual... But not before a final bit of navel gazing lol.

So, my task now is to build a new professional persona. I can't wait to get started and you'll have a ring-side seat!! My personal and professional contexts - new and old - in balance is my goal. Google made me but I can make a difference at Cisco. (more on TAO's in my next post as I said). And remember, change is nothing new to me. So, a final thought:

Management always said that rotating the best Googler brains across our departments was "like trading sweets after Halloween (...). A poor managers inclination is to hold the M&M's and trade the raisins. Good for them, bad for Google". Share the love, dude. "Trade the M&M's, keep the raisins". I'm no raisin and I moved around Google, believe me... but this M&M has something new to do and I hope it's with googles blessing (I'll be a Googler in my heart forever - cover your ears Cisco lol). They also taught me this: "Treat your career like you're surfing" Sage words that give me endless solace at this bitter sweet time. I'm just ridin' a new wave in the same ocean. Surfing Cisco is going to be a lot of fun and you'll be sure to hear all about it.