

A DREAM DIALECTIC:
THE LITTLE DEATH

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spread it

A Freedom Book

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It is intended but not expected.

Meditation on Chopping Wood

The ax flows like the wind striking into the fallen tree with fervor. At this point it makes more of a dent in the wood than a clean cut. Slicing through the air it comes down with a loud whack hitting the tree at various angles trimming more and more whey from the thick of its yellow interior.

I stand there sweating. At my back stands a large bonfire with many fellow revelers who journeyed here in the dark through a valley of tall thicket and bramble pushed back by our hosts to form a path. In the city, hedges this high are considered weeds. Out here in the mountains this is nature. Untouched and untrained by man's hand until a few hours ago earlier tonight. And the forest. Oh, the forest that surrounds us. Dark and mysterious. Full of the old preamble of fallen logs and there is no one who lives out here to tell it.

And here I am, miming the energy of Neal Cassidy holding an ax high over my head, jargon and random curses spitting out of my tongue,

on top of one hill looking up to another, attempting the impossible, and not quitting until the task is complete.

I look into the tree and I see its rotting sinews still strong with sap and wet with the morning dew. To chop it down is to set it free. I want so dearly to hear that satiating crack. A limb splitting in two. But I go against the grain and all I hear is the dull thud of this impressive mass of earth pushing back at me.

I remove my shirt sweat stinging my eyes. My arms feeling limp in between each swing. All the strength of my spirit being grounded with each bounce of the ax back into the valley floor. I begin to doubt this meditation and the possibility of me ever completing it.

I have to remind myself that man once was capable of splitting logs this way. Still some men exist who don't need a chainsaw to have their fill. In the olden days men built log cabins out of trees much thicker than this one. They conquered the wilderness with only a

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few handmade tools in their possession. They walked into a sea of redwoods and one trunk at a time they built their home.

I am not one of those men, but if I can I will have my moment as one.

More people arrive for the party. Some perceive me with curiosity and ask if they can also take a swing. Others hardly even notice my grunts in the dark in this community of mountainfolk who find these ways the day to day. I laugh quietly at my outward display of masculinity. But it is so much more than that. I want to know what this body is capable of. I want to know if man can still build himself a home. I want to know if I am truly God the maker of my universe. There is only one way to know all of these things and it sits humbly before me.

The log rolls back and forth on the flat patch of grass. I grab a large rock and try kicking the log over top of it. I have someone stand on one end while I jump on the other. The log stays firm and I go off into the woods

to find more rocks.

The fire grows behind me. The lumber I pulled from the forest earlier goes up as warm sparks into the sky dotting the countless stars above us in ash. The pile dwindles and more branches are pulled from the trees. Insects sing songs and the wood continues to crackle over the casual conversations that are all around.

Two hours pass and then three and I am still chopping this tree. I've gotten it to a point where the rivet goes all around it. I've approached its circumference from all sides. Still the tree braces for impact each time and throws itself back at me. It is a test and I will not be broken before the tree.

There is music that comes out of the campfire. Several travelers hitched a train from New Orleans to arrive here. They brought a full string orchestra on their backs in the form of homemade guitars and percussion. A few partakers dance merrily. Others request songs that no one knows and so they come up with

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their own.

I fly at the log with all my weight and passion. I want to be free from this task. I too want to be social and merry. I want to be done with it and have my own worth proven. I want to feel the sound of it and all the weight of my past up until this moment snap in half before me. It feels close now. It feels right. It feels like only a few more strikes and I will have it.

I take a break. My mind is beaten more than my body. There is a keg in the woods so I take a beer and feel it relieve me. I talk to a girl. I talk to some travelers. I talk to my friends. I stand by the fire and nod. After I've had time to reflect, I return to my duty of chopping the fallen tree.

One two three four five. There are still several more strikes to go. I pick the log up over my head and throw it down on the ground as hard as I can. I kick at it. I claw at it. I yell at it. It looks so ready to break and be set free. I stand there and look at it.

Examine it. Understand it. I run my fingers along it. Feel it as if it were a part of me. I diagnose its fracturing point and place it back onto the pile of rocks I have built to hold it. I wipe the sweat from my brow and with one final gasp I drive the ax right through its heart breaking it in two.

The fire burns all night with my log continuously feeding the much smaller branches around it. At first it does not catch, but when it does its whole body glows. I smile at it and it laps warmth back at me. After most people leave, it is still going. The few of us who remain decide to sleep there close by staying warm by its light. Taking in the stars, the smoke, the silence we lay there all evening. I hear a couple fucking off in the distance. This moment is joyful. The fire dances all around us like firecrackers going off in the night. I sleep soundly. I sleep deeply. I dream I am who I am and nothing more nothing less. In the morning when I wake up the log is still smoldering and my inner fire is dancing reborn.

The hash we smoke on this trip is not like the mushrooms we took on our first trip instead making us sleepy and sometimes irritable. There is a certain point when Willow Zef snaps at me and yells at my tomfoolery calling me a dickhead a Dickhead A DICKHEAD. I laugh and smile popping across the room in several quick gestures out the door and into my car to grab the unicorn mask from my backpack re-entering the room with it placed on my head and after the laughter has subsided I return to my seat on the couch next to him.

Once enough time has elapsed I remove the mask and say to him, "Yes, I am a dickhead. You're right."

The Little Death

Sitting on top of an RV on top of a mountain outside of Brattleboro in southern Vermont I stare up at the night sky and become completely unnerved as stars swirl like galaxies above my tiny insignificant head. The feeling drops like a brick to my gut and I shiver with new found consciousness shocking light down my spinal cord in quick painful succession. The old ego dies. Its back breaks in two. I feel it. A quick snap and I am thrown through a wandering black hole of infinite nothingness heavy with the weight of a thousand stars. My hands legs and feet all fall out from beneath me. I tirelessly grapple with the sleeping bag trying to block out this insane vision of vivid reality. Sweat runs down my brow. I am cold sober and yet I am having the first purely hallucinogenic experience of this lifetime.

I am nothing. And therefore I am everything.

The Little Death often creeps up on the spectator like a ghost under frozen water. His density is the same as the blackest sun in the galaxy. His potency is as soluble and possibly more explosive than McKenna's fabled "hero dose". To some *the Little Death* is an actual life ender. To everyone a response of absolute fear is most likely. There are very many who exit this space of the mind insane and very few who come out with a full understanding of this wholly singular moment. But everyone who experiences *the Little Death* is forever changed.

In those stars I see my own insignificance. They are infinite and I am only one. I have never seen stars like those. So many. So pure. Eternal flames burning longer than time. Circling around each flame an even

more infinite number of planets just like ours. Or drastically different. Life forms the human mind cannot comprehend. Life styles the human being was never meant to understand. Dimensions parallel and tangential. Everything is infinite. And I experience the ego shudder back in horror as it realizes its own lack of significance. It literally turns white with fear. A coward by nature. It sees its own death of importance and then goes on and actually dies. I an empty shell am left there for a multitude of moments without a single thought. No inner voice. Nothing.

And that is when the beauty starts.

The Little Death is the great life bringer. Out of the ash grows a truer soul. Once the ego is peeled back and discarded reality opens up like a flower. One experiences a connection with their own values and from this a better understanding for the workings surrounding them. For once they are allied

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with the earth the heavens and the hells in a counterbalance of various flat lines and linear meanings. They are no longer alone. They have infinite being in front of them. And behind them lies only more greener infinity.

Past lives past traumas past confusions suddenly seem all that more wonderful in their dissolution. One and everything. The dreamer awakens and realizes his visions of extraordinary are finite and yet everlasting. One with everything. No other truer self than the self that stands allied with all that surrounds him.

In the dark the stars continue to swirl and a close by stream continues to trickle. Other than this there is absolute silence. The fear lies in the silence for at any moment something monstrous should come out and rip the boy to shreds. But it does not come. The boy lays there waiting and with each waking moment he feels lighter and lighter. With his own insignificance comes a release from all

guilty delusion and bad tide. A final surrender to the flow that is his nature. He is nothing by pure calculation, and yet the ratio that briefs his untimely end is a golden ratio. He burns bright in the night like those innumerable stars. A star himself finding his own gravitation. For the first time everything is transparent. Nothing and everything. He shines brighter. The ego is long dead. The night consumes him. And he shines brighter.

We are all stars in a great sea of stars shining brighter than the universe ever saw possible.

In Northampton we ride our bikes along greenways built over old railways. We stop upon a farm and pick raspberries and blueberries that are infinite just for this moment. Later we bake several pies and feed several house guests adding in fresh veggies bought along the road.

In Boston I am in awe as a punk warehouse is transformed into an open word exchange. Poets and musicians and scholars sit round combining into the most wonderful of audiences. These are people that read and dream and believe life is at its fullest when lived.

Life at Walden Pond

The water beckons a challenge to live one's life. Its cold runs to new depth creating icy patches upon my toes as they dip further into the darkness gesturing towards a sandy bottom covered in the black of night. Thoreau still occupies this space. His poetry flows with the ripples of wind on water. Waves eternal. Words everywhere and everything. *Rise up young youth. Your summer swim spot is a place for transcendence. Bathe here and feel your soul purified.*

I dream I am alone as I swim across from shore to shore. Each stroke pushing me further out into the open and farther from my friends talking deeply barely noticing my absence. Fear creeps up my neck into my conscious mind as I realize how far I have gone and how far I still have yet to go. Treading water I take a long look around me. Lifeguards watching children splash starbursts into the sky. Families camping underneath the friendly shade

of pines. Lovers groping bodies enchanted by the reflection of their kiss in the cool pool. Summer wanderers. Avid vacationers. Dream makers.

My body drags underneath a passing wave. Around me the sun spirals into bands of light broken by the dark sheen of the lake top over my head. Submerged breath is cut short and the mind grows cold. Panic fear absolved. The birds no longer chirp where the body lays. And the mind turns over a new chord. A oneness with both body and soul. Silence falls except for the beating of my own heart at the back of my eardrum. The water speaks to me:

Drink deep from the river of your own being and rise up anew. Become the person you tempted yourself to be. All the strength in the world is yours. It only needs a controlled breath and from there the vision becomes clearer.

I resurface and notice not one but two swimmers gradually make their way past me. Their intersection and crossover like two

planes in the sky. Trails of motion laying out across the lake as they drift forward in time.

And all around them even greater swimmers taking a stroll through the lake deep. Merry pranksters on afternoon jaunts cooling off from the summer sun. Paths each unique in rhythm. Beaten roads as flexible as the liquid that they were born in. A great network of wonderers lucidly living lakeside.

I take a breath sucking in the warm sun's heat. The fear of drowning subsiding. The body making the right motion of fingertips cupped into paddles pushing water across the side and out underneath the feet kicking brilliantly like something alive all inside. The mind masters the body and the body masters the earth.

On the opposing shore there is a moment of triumph. Thoreau stands there admiring another walker of the way. His statuette hand outstretched in an expression of open embrace. He takes note of all the fellow nature lovers who take day trips to his homeland. Natives of

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Concord and Boston artists and writers lifers
and dreamers all drinking deep and breathing
big. His smile is in the peace of the land. No
one tripping over his grave anytime soon. As
his body is now a vast valley of life.

In Lowell we stumble upon a memorial to Kerouac. There are bums sleeping along the benches and Willow Zef tells me the lines they chose to memorialize aren't even the good ones. The internet made me imagine a grand statue of beaten worth but eventually we are humbled by these ugly placards and the vagrants that surround them totally unnoticed by the rest of this small city.

We drive blindly following signs for New England's largest independent bookstore and a hill named *Poet's Seat*. We pass crust punks and street fairs culture shops and open air boutiques trash collectors and traveling salesmen before we finally find a place to park. Willow Zef climbs atop the final sign and as I take a picture of him my phone dies.

We never find out who the actual poet is.

I swim in a waterfall while Willow Zef sleeps in the car underneath a tree. I watch as a small child goes up to the waterfall and places her head and then whole body underneath it and then moves behind it. I swim over to the waterfall and do the same looking back out on a blurred version of people of all ages enjoying the summer warmth feeling the onset of a fresh perspective.

The Streams of Brattleboro

In the morning we bathe in a close by stream. First the woman our host then my brother and finally myself standing in the water of life naked as we came in all our beauty speechless triumphant with narrow eyes observing each other's individual bends private curvatures unspoken parts and looking past that into the eyes through them until all that is real is the aura of spirit glowing wildly in the midmorning summer haze.

The water is cold and knocks the wind from our chests as we dive deep into a pool of reflection. Washing our outer shell with natural perfumes rebirthing our inner souls with mountain spring freshness.

And then with shocking delight for a moment that is both awkward and subtle yet full of arousal an impulse arises to merge our bodies in romance. To gain what is called

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in the true French *la petit mort*. To lie down together on the warm sunlit grass beside the stream beside the road off in the mountains. The thought drifts briefly into our waking consciousness and as I speak I see her eyes look downwards inspecting my size and analyzing what it would feel like to hold me erect in her open palm and then with ravenous delight force me into her exposed womb breathing deeply the image settling softly inside her transparent mind a fiction or fantasy. Not too soon after the tension in her eyes subsides and like an unborn leaf leaving with the flow the moment drifts further now on down the stream out of this current perspective.

Again, the moment is now and currently we see each other with a greater love a fondness from a higher realm a connection so simple it should exist between every living creature an ability to look past the surface and see for once another being vulnerable and beautiful in all of its mysterious glow.

A More Fair Trade

We drive through the countryside and into small villages across mountaintops and into fragrant valleys onto college campuses and into comfortable homes.

The rucksack revolution modernized into the sublime. Feed us from your farm and we will feed you with our words and weirding ways. Put us to work and we will help you harvest the summer's feast. Let us chop your wood and stir your fires. We've even brought our own axes. We understand what is a fair trade and we will do our best to leave you satisfied. Even if it is merely an invitation for you to come stay in our own homes meet our good friends eat our own food and share with us your stories.

