



IN THE SUMMER OF 2013,
Willow Zef and Marshall James Kavanaugh set out
on the road again. This time their adventures
take them to Massachusetts and Southern Vermont.
With a car full of poetry and two axes for chop-
ping wood, they end up in the mountains. This is
the story of what they find or rather what finds
them in the black of night with only the stars
for guiding light.



spread it

A DREAM DIALECTIC:
THE LITTLE DEATH

**Marshall
James
Kavanaugh**

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Marshall James Kavanaugh



A Freedom Book

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It is intended but not expected.

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

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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 am 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 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.

Balancing the flow takes a sometimes conscious effort with an understanding that the ends will most definitely be unconscious. It is sometimes not as simple as silencing the mind and seeing what happens. Very often it requires a very egoless inner force pushing to see things through takes the shape of a complete reformatting of the personal in order to establish better intentions and become closer to the inner self. Of course this also means an acceptance of the ego and all of its pursuits. But acceptance is not submission. One must be sure to accept and pursue all sides of

their self to see their full potential. This includes strengths and weaknesses. And it most definitely means a balance will be found.

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."

In Northampton we ride our bikes along greenways built over old railways. We stop upon a farm and pick raspberries and blueber-

ries 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. Fami-

lies 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 wonders 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 lovers of nature who take day trips to his homeland. Na-
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tives of 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 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.

We stop through Providence feeling out of place and confused. On the first day of our trip I dreamt this was a place where we would have our final reading and my erotic transgressions would be embraced by queer and ambiguous culturists. Instead we wander through the Gaudi landscape that is RISD and speak out loud of Dali.

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.

Each time I return to the city the ego is there waiting for me. He is present in the massive skyscrapers and the density of foot traffic on the streets. He waits for me in dive bars and in the underbelly of basement shows. His weight is heavy and when he grabs hold of me he digs in and grows roots. Every day he gets stronger. Soon he convinces me I am worthy I am entitled I deserve everything that does not naturally come to me. He is preoccupied by money sex fame rock n' roll and the hall of fame. If left unmonitored his delusions of grandeur will soon work their way into my every day narrative. Clouding my judgment and causing conflict with those around me. Eventually he will lead me into the dark.

He is not an evil man. By no means does he mean to cause me such grief. He has such strength if he just learns how to direct it more accurately. But he is unfortunately misguided. Sick with a fear of the world. The societal standards that this civilization was

built on. Don't talk to strangers. Never travel alone. Be afraid of everything and everyone. You are going to die. His sickness runs deeps in us all and it is not his fault. (I'd blame the media but not the internet.)

As medicine I have prescribed for him a weekly trip into the woods. Travel in general seems to keep him from digging in too deep. Conversing strangers with exposed vulnerability is always healing. But the woods are where he really folds back and passes on. Like a parasite he drops off into the grass at my feet my body gaining strength with every step away from him. Self-awareness seeps into every cell inside me until it seeps into the aura that again more fully surrounds me. The light glows and I gain a more clear perspective of this beautiful reality.

These Little Deaths are important to me.

They are what keep me happy. They are what
allow me to be alive.