

The Passion of the World



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Author's note: This paper was heavily influenced by Craig Holdrege and his art of deeply diving into a focus in order to grasp its entirety. However, this paper differs immensely from his methods and approach. It is a chronological set of experiences and the thoughts, emotions, and realizations they evoked in me. I believe that to fully express the experience of freedom, I need to be free in expressing it. Please read this thoughtfully with your mind open to its fullest potential. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Enjoy!

Introduction

Ever since I was a young boy I loved adventure. I was a barefoot, bug-collecting, buddy-making, belligerent child and I've worked hard to hold on to that person as I grow older and realize *the weight of what it is to be*; the heavy packs we all carry as we walk this world of ours. Part of this effort to make life a carnival, to feel uplifted by my existence, involves seeking adventure and *something new*. The world is such an unbelievable place, full of darkness and wonder. We live in heaven but we go through hell. It doesn't seem fair to me. I've spent so much time in my life trying to be free from myself, as if I were a captive within me. I want my life to be utterly exciting and passionate, a burning. With this mindset, I moved down the West Coast of America at my own pace with senses to quench and shivers up and down my spine. Along the snaky, fabled route 101 I met the passion of the world. The passion of the world is a barefoot boy, a little prince, who is hungry for joy, happiness, beauty, meaning, and longs to love and to be loved. He is in everyone, in all things, and that little prince held my hand as he led me, full of wonder, through my massive, chaotic, empowering, tragic experience of facing the world. This is what I intend this paper to focus upon: the passion of the world, that which is within us all and tugs at our clothes and carries us, like the Earth's magnetic pole, to newfound love and meaning. That which makes us tame and untame. Wild. That which, like gravity, pushes against and challenges us with its limits and its limitlessness. *What is my passion and where does it intersect with the passion of the world?*

The Hungry Animal

AMAZING! The world we live in is so utterly amazing! I left my comfortable abode on the cushy campus of Evergreen and hit the road running. Everything was bright and I felt alive. People began picking me up, it felt smooth; my heart beat to a different pace than it had before. It beat to the drum of the passion of the world, which swirled around me in an electric storm of wind and rain. My shoulders were wings. I breathed it all in, I was a hungry animal.

Death of a Loved One

One of the earlier rides that I got was from a man in Shelton named Jack who had a big, gutted van with three black Labradors in it. He explained to me that his wife of 40 years, Jane, had suddenly passed away a few months ago. I asked him if he still had enough love in his life. "Oh I think I've got all the love I need", he said softly as he set his hand upon his dog's head. That was an early lesson on the loneliness of the world. We sit inside ourselves and pull puppet strings and look out at life in search of beauty and meaning and love. I cannot even begin to fathom what the loss of a wife of 40 years would feel like. What a heavy weight, what a chasmic *empty*. How does he sleep at night knowing that she is not sleeping next to him, her fading scent on the pillow beside him? Its no wonder that the world is full of sleeping medications and antidepressants and mood stabilizers. Maybe Jack can still feel her within him, a baby in his womb turning over and over again in blanketed sleep. He will love her for as long as love is possible. I thought about love that I have had and lost. The mountain-peaks of happiness in life make possible the deep dark valleys of twisted, tangled twilight forests. That which makes us full turns to emptiness. That which spills us fills us.

Port Angeles

During the first week of February I arrived in in Port Angeles, Washington on the Olympic Peninsula with Canada across the water in clear sight. There I came to the acquaintance of a young man from Ireland, James, who offered me a room in his house and food to eat. We got along well and spent the rest of the evening together. Now *this* kid had a crazy story for me. James is a “streetwalker” from Ireland and when he was a young adolescent his father killed himself. After the suicide James and his mother moved to the United States and ended up in Port Angeles. James’ mother fell into meth addiction and any stability left in their lives began to deteriorate even further. She lost everything and now she lives in the Safeway parking lot where Jeremy uses his food stamps every day. He sees his her occasionally. Meth, that pale vampire, sucked away at her brain and she is gone now. Jeremy explained to me the way that she looks at him when they bump into each other every now and then. She doesn’t know who his is anymore, but she stares at him as if she senses in him significance from the rest of the faces passing on the gray muffled streets. James showed me the spot behind Safeway where she squats; she wasn’t there. James lives with the sweetest guy in the world, Scuba, who feeds him and houses him and supports him for nothing in exchange. They are addicted to heroin. They smoked it while I was there. I helped James to bed (he was glassy-eyed and kept falling asleep around the house) and he spoke in his comatose slumber. He is bi-sexual. He is part of a gang. He is schizophrenic. He is kind and sweet and caring and he took care of me that night and I felt lucky to have met him. I asked James the same question that I had asked the widower earlier that week: “Do you

still find enough love and joy in life?" "Yes", was his answer and it made me smile. He spoke about making the best out of what you have and extracting joy from unlikely places. This is called being present for the passion of the world, which flows and flows and flows. James is a broken youth, a strange little prince. It is sad and impossible to conceive the full tragedy of all the Earth's broken people and their broken lives. I have a difficult time deciding what is broken and what is not, what is thirsty and what is in need, but I hear that drought makes the roots grow deeper.

The Bull Elk

After leaving Port Angeles I spent a night in the Hoh Rainforest basin. I was setting up my tent at my campsite when the ranger drove by and explained that he was getting off duty early because there were no other visitors. He also let me camp there free of charge. I was 19 miles from the 101 and there was no cellphone reception. To explore the rainforest and kill some time, I went on a hike around the basin. That is when I met the bull elk. I was looking down at the trail without realizing that I was walking right towards him. I was about eight feet away when I noticed. He was a magnificent 8-point bull who could have easily killed me and he was staring into me, letting out a hard and disapproving breath from his nostrils. I curled up slowly onto the ground and looked down at my knees. The elk came closer, watched how weak I could be, and went back to grazing in the brush. A twig snapped in the forest behind me and for an instant I met eyes with his cow that was much further away; she was a shyer beauty, I was between them. I sat with that bull for the better part of an hour, writing, talking to it, and most of all just gaping at it. What an incredible vessel for the force of life to inhabit. The life of a bull elk in the

Hoh Rainforest is a noble existence. I trusted that noble existence in him and he trusted me. In this way, we acknowledged each other and our place in the passion of the world.

Vampires

Soon I was on the coast of southern Washington driving to Long Beach in a car with Ray. "I am responsible for everything that happens in my life," he said, "everything I experience is a result of my choices, my actions. *But the world is full of vampires.*" Ray's words were profound to me and they have stayed on the tracks of my train of thought ever since. The world *is* full of vampires. It's fine, it's beautiful. We are all vampires, biting each other, sharing the Red; and the world bleeds so beautifully. The world itself sucks back our blood when life is finished. I wrote a song about this idea. Here is a portion of it:

*We roam the night
with our hands tightly tied,
in search of a bite
to fill our appetites.
There's a sliver of light
from the hole from the knife.
It proves that you're human
and everything's alright*

The Commune

Along the southern coast of Oregon, every hitchhiker's dream became reality for me. I was on the side of the road when an older couple pulled over and invited

me to their commune in the coastal hill near Bandon, OR. That place was beyond belief. Those eighty acres held two *huge* and elegant houses, offices, a dance studio, a farm, greenhouses, chickens, a workshop, a meditation path, tons of equipment for all kinds of recording, winding gravel roads, an orchard, a pool, and about 15 of the most angelic people I have ever met. This was *not* your average commune. They fed me and gave me a room to stay in. We all played music together, recorded some songs, went for walks around the property, gardened, and just sat and talked. Everyone there was so kind to me and had something insightful to say to a youth on a personal journey. My personal journey must have also intrigued Arnold, the leader of the commune, because he summoned for me the morning I was to leave. Arnold is one of the most thoughtful, intelligent, delightfully sporadic people I have ever had the pleasure to meet. We talked for three hours that morning, walking in circles around the deck of the house. We spoke of many, *many* things but Arnolds's greatest teaching to me had to do with love.

Pitching the Ball

You have to put in what you want to get out. Simple, but how easily we forget and doubt it. Arnold had a nice way of putting it, "Its all about how hard you're willing to pitch the ball, the way it spins and curves as it flies toward the batter. It's up to the other person, or whatever it is that you are trying to connect with, to decide how hard they are will to swing blindly back." It's true with any emotion or vibe or aura; romance, friendship, family, joy, anger, stress, etc. Arnold continued on to explain that this love, this throwing of the ball towards the bat, is god. He was not religiously affiliated, but extremely spiritual. "Wherever there is religion there are

bleeding hearts *freaking out, man!*" He spoke of the interconnectedness of beings, of all things real and unreal. He said the world is full of idiots in love, stabbing and stabbing at each other and stitching up the wounds. We hurl meteors at each other's worlds. He rocked back and forth and threw his long Jerry Garcia hair back over his head and slapped me on the back and was full of exclamations.

Since the morning of that conversation I have come closer to the man I want to be. It has changed my relationship with the world. I want to be a vessel of love and positive vibes. Enough so that when I walk through the world, this cruel world that I have been describing, I can profoundly influence anyone who comes into my space. Love, joy, the little prince, something holy, something pure, the passion of the world; I want it within me so that I can see my heaven on Earth and share it with anyone who wants a piece. Love is truly a powerful force, but it falls short somehow. We go blind with sadness and rage and tell ourselves, "This is it, this is my life and who I am", even if we are displeased with it. Life becomes monotonous, gray, passionless. We regret ourselves and our choices and forget the beauty within and without us; that electric storm that swirls magenta and flashes internally. Through countless half-assed ball tosses and half-assed swings, we convince each other and ourselves that we cannot see the presence of an immense potential for joy and love and passion and whatever the hell else you want from this heaven.

Conclusion

This world really is heaven. I had a ride from a man who emphasized this heaven with beautiful fury. He quoted Bob Marley endlessly. "... *if you know what life*

is worth, you would look for yours on Earth", he said to me before he gave me a hug, told me he loved me, and disappeared down the road.

I feel luckier to be alive. I feel empowered by my will and the world; physically, mentally, and spiritually. I am weathered, in a good way. My existence seems more profound to me because I now know that the world *needs* me like it needs everyone. I want to be a window into the passion of the world for other so that they can identify that passion within themselves and everyone and every single thing that exists. It is not a weight to *be*, but a tragic and turbulent flight through beautiful skies, floating, rising, kissing the sun and burning out. Burden washes away in the rain of the passion of the world.

I no longer have an urge to be free from myself. I want to be entirely comfortable, entirely captive, and entirely tame, entirely in love with *me*. There is no greater wealth than trusting yourself. There is no greater freedom in life than loving yourself. Self-love is the bridge to the passion of the world. The passion of the world is the bridge to the self.

On the train ride back to Olympia I did my best to identify my passion. This is what I wrote: *My passion is the urge to feel passionate, to drink the world's passion, to be on fire and burn and burn until I burn out and everything around me is glowing like golden embers.*

