**Showcasing the DNR: September when she comes**

*“Now the rain’s been droppin,’ drip drop a drippin’ every day you’ve been away,” —* Aaron Schroeder and Chuck Kaye

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I’m sitting up in bed listening. Everyone else has gone to sleep. With the darkness gathered around me, I’ve got my eyes closed, listening.

I can hear my watch ticking on the nightstand next to the bed. It’s a comforting sound, one borne of rhythm and reliability. It might be the sound of life, or at least the click track we wrap our lives around.

The ticking of time is always there, playing in the background – sometimes soft and unnoticeable, other times so loud there’s nothing else to hear. Most times, it’s clicking somewhere in between.

Whether we humans are late or early or right on time, we’re always aware of time in some fashion. If not, others will remind us.

This is probably the main reason I often remove my watch before heading out into nature – I don’t want to be reminded of time when I’m “out there.”

A house itself can make odd sounds you don’t often hear during the daytime, bumps or knocks, sometimes clanks, other noises indescribable. The house seems quiet tonight.

I’ve got my head on the pillow now, facing the wall. I’m getting a little sleepy myself. I’m moving into that territory between resting comfortably and sleeping deep – the time when my mind rolls around like a bottle on the bottom of a boat.

Like most folks, I suspect, I am usually generally focused during this time on what happened today and what I’ve got to do tomorrow, but interspersed in there are thoughts that range randomly over an incredible breadth.

Examples:

* When we were kids playing with little green Army men, why did we accept that the faces and hands of these soldiers would also be green?
* When caged monkeys at the zoo look out through the bars at us, do they see what we see when we look in?
* Do dolphins try to talk underwater like kids do?

There it is. Finally. I’m just now starting to hear what I’ve been waiting for – the sound of raindrops on the roof. There’s supposed to be a big storm tonight.

Sometimes when I’m trying to think, or write or concentrate in some other way, I put rain sounds in my headphones. I think it works for me because it’s relaxing. I guess it’s a noise that sounds similar to white noise that helps babies sleep.

Maybe it’s because there’s a lot of syncopated rhythm to hear in the raindrop’s patter and the seconds and minutes and hours ticking away, back there in between or underneath the sound somewhere – like a subliminal metronome keeping my mind in time to the music of the clock.

My dad used to talk about a night he spent at a camp of one of his friends. He said the rain poured hard and he was lying in bed listening to the rain fall on the tin roof.

He said he slept the best he ever had that night. It’s kind of strange to me that he would remember that so profoundly that he would recall it often over the years, telling me about it again and again as though I had never heard about it before.

What kind of magic is in the sound of raindrops?

I don’t know, but I think maybe it’s some type of unconscious healing, recovery or reconstruction — kind of like sleep.

Think of how many songs there are about rain – “*Clouds of mystery pouring confusion on the ground.”*

Random fact: It takes just a few short seconds for a raindrop to fall to Earth.

Wait a minute. The rain just stopped.

I listen now and hear the silence thumping out its nothingness – except for the low rumble sound of the refrigerator running. There are those sounds too in a house, the familiar ones we have come to know and usually tune out in our listening.

I spent some of my time today along a staircase of rapids. The clear, cold water tumbled over fractured gray and black slate, fizzing and bubbling.

I had brought my camera down there with some new toys to learn some old tricks. With the help of a remote shutter release, I was working to slow down the shutter speed long enough to make those rapids soft, smooth and silky.

It was a fun early evening activity. The woods were still lush and green, though a yellow apple, kissed on one side with a blush of pink red, had fallen from a tree up along the canyon wall and rolled.

It had made its way to the riverbank where I stood. It just missed making it to the river by a couple of feet. In the water, who knows how far it might have floated. Maybe all the way to the Atlantic.

That apple was the only real sign of fall in view from the floor of this canyon, except for the gray skies sprinkling a bit and the winds picking up the lead-colored waves to a white-topped chop on the big lake.

Looking into the clear river waters swirling beneath the cascades, I thought that soon the fall salmon and steelhead would be making their way up this river to spawn. There are a couple of holes here where fish might be holding already, but I haven’t seen any.

The tall cement walls of the abutments of the railroad bridge here are tagged with spray-painted graffiti, spoiling the view. I wonder if the fish notice these messages when they swim on past, and if they do, do they shake their heads?

I didn’t hike too far up the river, but far enough to get some fine shots and soak up some of the soothing sound of the waterfalls – drowning out everything else – even blue jays and crows.

Here in this room, I’m still listening.

The rain still hasn’t started back up. I did see a few flashes of lightning streak across the horizon, but that rain I heard certainly could not have been the forecasted storm.

I’ll keep waiting.

The refrigerator just kicked back on again.

I’m getting sleepy, so I get under the covers and turn out the light. Almost immediately, the rain begins to fall. It starts out slow and then accelerates to a pretty loud speckling.

Then it cuts back again to almost nothing. In a few minutes it begins to rain harder again, this time sounding like mice scampering in between the walls.

I don’t remember much of anything after this. I must have fallen asleep quickly.

It’s morning and it has stopped raining. There are puddles outside, but the big storm –with tremendous winds and more than an inch of rain – didn’t happen, at least not here.

Outside, I hear a loon’s wail from the lake. Chickadees, kinglets and warblers are all making their short calls from hiding places within the trees and brush.

A broad-winged hawk sitting on a branch didn’t want to have his picture taken. I can’t blame him. The sun might be trying to peek out.

It seems warmer out this morning than I remember it being when I went in the house last night. I decide it’s going to be a T-shirt and jeans day. I go back in through the door I came out.

I listen to the door close behind me and I head upstairs. As I grab the wooden bannister rail, I hear it.

The refrigerator just kicked on again.

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