**Showcasing the DNR: The magician’s trick**

*“Sometimes, the silence can be like thunder,”* – Bob Dylan

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On a day threatening rain showers, I find myself alone walking a familiar path, looking for truth, honesty and reason amid the heavenly confines of nature.

This is a strange and mysterious pursuit.

Sometimes, like spending time in the company of good friends, just walking a familiar trail can bring feelings of relief, regeneration and recovery. So, returning to places well-known can sometimes inspire the sentiments, reorganization and recompense I’m seeking.

Other times, the adjustment to get me back on track in my mind and in my heart is more elusive. I can feel like a broken wheel, or a bent rim that won’t spin straight anymore.

I can be surprisingly clumsy on certain days, dropping things unpredictably left and right – leaving me hesitant to touch vital parts of my body in fear that they might drop off and roll into a corner of the room to shatter.

There are days when I need to try four times as hard to get one thing to go right.

For some reason, these instances of miscues, mistakes and misunderstanding often occur most when I have had only limited time spent out in the wilds of nature.

Something out there is dramatically different than what goes on in the other scenes in this sad, hurting and troubled world.

Nature clearly supports and cultivates healing and hope. How it does this exactly is unclear, though there are certain elements that appear to play significant roles in this phenomenon.

These elements are all, in one way or another or in combination, connected to the senses of touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing.

Putting my hand in an icy stream and then touching my cold, wet hand to my cheeks or covering my eyes with my hand can immediately cool the burning questions or the racing in my brain.

Tasting and smelling the sweet, ripe berries of summertime provides an enjoyment of something so pure and wild and rare it’s exhilarating.

I could sit for hours in peace watching nothing more than the stillness on a secluded pond or lake, feeling the rays of the setting sun’s radiance warm me as I listen to the birds in the surrounding forest singing, or the slurp sounds of fish rising or jumping.

Evening wears on and the descending cool of twilight drops a curtain or a cloak of soothing cool around my shoulders, urging me to lay down under the quaking aspen trees to fall fast asleep in the soft, long grass.

So sacred are moments like these that I somehow think even mosquitoes know better than to interrupt the transfiguration taking place.

I sleep without dreams, dead to the world like a rock – granite chipped and worn, but still present with a sense of permanence after all.

It is in this slumber that nature turns loose its fairies and sprites to bare their darning needles and spider silk to bind up my wounds and shortcomings. This is also often the time when seeds of truth are sown.

The waking is like what I think returning from a coma might be like. I immediately wonder where I am, what time it is and what day is it. How did I happen to get here?

Then I’ll hear the bright, bubbling sound of a chickadee singing to me. This will break the spell. I then recall that I came here myself, looking for this place. I chose to lie beneath the aspen tree to hear its leaves fluttering and whispering in the wind.

The grasses were cool after the heat of the day, and I became so tired. It was a weariness beyond my realization. Though once I settled prone in the grass, it became clear I was meant to retire to this place of shelter and sustenance, of repair and renewal.

There are times when doing things in nature becomes a tonic for whatever ails me, whether it’s fishing, hiking, picnicking, taking pictures, stargazing or picking berries.

But there are other times when nature seems to be telling me to not do anything – to sit, be quiet and believe, like the old scripture verse says: “Be still and know that I am God.”

Clouds bring healing and help, just by their presence. It’s hard to watch a fleet of big, puffy cumulus clouds parade overhead on a warm summer day and feel anxious, tense or frustrated.

Can there be a more obvious mental, emotional and physical connection between the showering rain from a rumbling thunderhead and the cleansing and renewal felt by the person soaked below?

Beyond these things, I think there is a sense of the intangible working in concert with the conscious and the subconscious to adjust my awareness of where and who I am.

There was an occasion this past week, when in the middle of the day, it was so quiet it was stunning. It was in the middle of the afternoon. There was no wind. I couldn’t hear any birds, any cars, anything.

It was a profound moment. My ears strained as I wondered what might have been occurring. Was this a blank moment in time when everything stopped and the clock itself took a brief rest?

Do such moments occur regularly but I am unaware?

Those few scant minutes or seconds or whatever it was were oddly unsettling for me, yet still deeply soothing.

Another time I was struck by nature’s silence this week was on a couple of occurrences when I happened to be out under the starry skies. The night air was cool and pleasant.

It was very early morning, in the wee, wee hours.

Again, there was no sound at all. I stood staring into the blackened night skies.

Then, with its tremendous instrument of a voice, I heard the haunting and prehistoric lone, long wail of a loon. The sound seemed to stretch like a rainbow from out on the lake, arcing all the way over the trees and houses and backyards and highway, to my waiting ears.

It was at once glorious, soul-stirring and peaceful, this voice of nature’s primeval dating back about 10,000 years. The loon would continue to call sporadically throughout the next couple of hours, sounding like it was lonely and forlorn, sad and weary.

I found a kinship in that mournful song, something I could know and understand. That sound was something I had felt and lived on more than one occasion.

I think that most often when I come to nature looking for renewal, I find it without ever clearly understanding how. It appears to soak into my being somehow by just immersing myself in the bigness and holiness of nature.

Perhaps all the sensory experiences work in concert to provide a peaceful numbing for my weary heart, soul and mind?

I also sense there is a knowing or a recognition of my presence in nature by nature. I know this might sound weird, but I don’t think nature welcomes me into its arms as a stranger.

I think I have been known since I was little kid, when I first sought to explore the wonder of a stream or pond or to be outside when it was nighttime. My guess is nature knows

I’m on my way before I even think about going out.

I sometimes wonder if I am not summoned by nature to come “back to the garden,” so to speak, to reconvene, to reconnect, to re-establish things lost, forgotten or obscured by the trivial nature of my social and worldly trappings.

Maybe nature is like a boxing coach who pulls me back to my corner before I get punch- drunk or an attentive parent, with a watchful eye, who sits close by when I begin to drift out into deeper water alone.

I probably will never truly understand.

But do I need to?

Sometimes I feel compelled to know how it works to keep me functioning, connected and still willing to try in this world.

Maybe in the end, it’s like a magician’s sleight of hand, the magic of the aurora borealis, a glorious sunrise or the song of that loon.

Deconstructing or distilling these things to cold, hard facts and figures would spoil the wonderment, the surprise, endurance and affinity.

In which case, I prefer not to know.

The one thing I can say with certainty is that the power of nature is real, and it works again and again and again.

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