

# [Trip]let[te]

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I took this photograph in a region of the inner Uintah-Wasatch-Cache National Forest on November 3rd, 2020, at 4:46 PM, just seven hours and fifty-seven minutes before I would embark on my next formal meditation sitting on a rock next to a pond in the middle of the cold night.

Megan and I had found a sort of timeshare cabin for a getaway weekend out in the mountains. We had a relaxing drive there, and it was an easy enough evening settling in. This would be our first visit, but not our last, as we came to really love the area. We made our dinner on the grill out front while enjoying the scene, the breeze, and the sun which had set for us, but which was still setting even further beyond our view. Our conversation was lively, energetic, and we felt at home together out with the trees. As the night drew to a close for the average sleeper, I knew, not simply because of the insomnia and the magnificent setting I found myself in, that I would not be sleeping anytime soon anyway, but would soon be finding a time and place to meditate. I waited until Megan had comfortably fallen asleep.

At 12:33AM on November 4, I began to get dressed, bundling up nice as I knew it was set to be a cold night out, ranging from 37 degrees down to 28 degrees during the course of this meditation. There was little to no wind, and the skies were magnificently clear. The stars were abundant and the sky was glittering.

I walked down a path to a small ledge on the mountainside to partake in some of my medical cannabis. I lit up an approximately 0.75g joint of the indica-dominant Grape Animals at



12:43 and stared off into the alleged distance, watching the trees ever-so gently sway the line between themselves and the sky.

When that deliciously peppered jelly-donut flavored grass was done cavorting with my gustatory cells and lungs, now establishing its various connections within my cannabinoid system, I completed the hike down the hill to the edge of the pond where I found my boulder. I actually wasn't sure where I would be meditating that night. I thought I would be hiking a bit more and meditating against a tree in some offset forest patch, but this massive boulder, which wasn't just a boulder, it was a rock—a rock I could fully lay down across—it was calling for me to join it above the water. It was sort of a precarious sitting, as the rock slanted forward into the pond which had already started its fall turnover freeze. Had I slid forward I would have headed straight through the thin film of ice and into the freezing water, a challenge I felt I was prepared for on this night. So at 1:03AM I took the risk and sat lotus position near the front edge of the rock on the slant above the water. I could not have dreamed of a more perfect view; not for another three years anyhow. Framed by the free-flowing of the forestry, lit up by the skycap of starlight, and supported by one of the many rocksteady eaves of Earth, I was one with it all. There was a brief moment here, just before I was to become entranced by a particular dance in the sky, when a fox emerged from the foliage and onto the pathway just across the pond where I had previously intended to continue my hike. It sat down and was looking back at me intently for some time before continuing on its way.

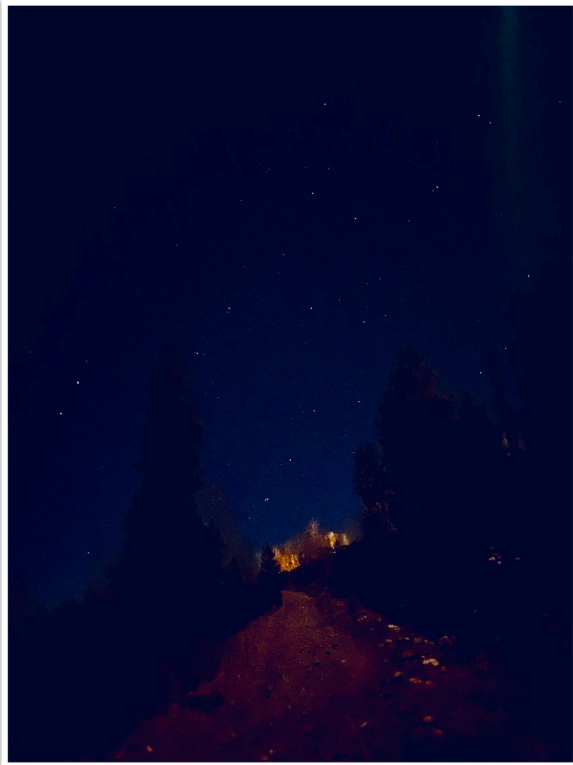
I looked up into the night sky again, this time Mars had just breached the forest line to my approximate southwest, making its enigmatic and hypnotic dance the . . .um . . .*star* of that night's night sky show. I recall being entirely enthralled by the way it seemed to sort of slither in a figure-eight, appearing to move slightly closer, then slightly further away but a little to one side, and then back round again; some sort of gravitational tug of war with Earth and Jupiter, and then the rest. While staring into this glistening waltz, the lightest of open-eye visuals began to take over the entire length of the sky, as if spiders began weaving webs from star to star in some sort of cosmic connect the dots activity. They were the most delicate strands of light I had ever seen. The entire scene was the only thing to possibly behold. It felt as D.E. Harding expressed,

“. . .that the star-sprinkled sky, though no longer distant from me by an angstrom, is nevertheless, more other, more awesomely celestial than ever it was. Lending it unlimited distance from my unlimited resources, I lend it unlimited enchantment.”<sup>1</sup>

I didn't want to be gone from the cabin too long that night, thirty to forty-five minutes maximum with the small hike included, so I thought I'd check in on the time. It was 2:23AM. I had been sitting on that rock watching the stars for an hour and twenty minutes believing that I had maybe been nearing my

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<sup>1</sup> Harding, D. E., *On Having No Head: Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious*, Shollund Trust, 2014



thirty minute mark. Local time had not been an object—a thing to be recorded into memory, as I rotated with the unprincipled tempo of the stars.

In a bit of a panic thinking Megan would be worried about me should she wake to not find me in or near the cabin I jumped off of the rock and started heading back. Shortly thereafter, I began to feel lethargic, and heavy, I also realized that if Megan had woken up to me having been gone that long I definitely would have heard from her by phone by now, so I knew I didn't need to fight through this and rush back. I took a moment to close my eyes, take a breath, and get myself together. I opened my eyes to see the big dipper dead ahead at the top of the path in front of me. I stopped and took a picture of it at 2:25AM.

I walked a little over one hundred yards towards the dipper and the hill, and just as I was nearing them I was again feeling fatigued, especially in my legs,

so I sat at the base of the hill to take another moment. I looked directly above me to notice the moon for the very first time. It was nearly full, just waning by a few days. I laid down flat on the ground so that I didn't have to crane my neck to enjoy the view. The surface of my mind reflected the moon like a body of water. I became a lake and the moon permeated the entire surface, diving with its light to surprising depths as it flickered and tossed about our residential cosmic fires; as if speaking a luminous sonar with my very core. There was a moment in the flickering, as if to the cadence of my own heartbeat, when the moon let me know that the show was over, and that it was time to carry that heartbeat to the cabin to settle into the rhythm of one of my absolute favorite heartbeats. I checked the time, and the moon and I said these metrical goodbyes just as it crossed the meridian at 3:03AM, another thirty minutes lost to the incandescent intonations of the night sky.

I made my way back, and as I reached the hillside just above the ledge where I smoked Grape Animals just hours before, I took in one last view of Mars, received two shooting stars to the northwest, and said thank you and goodnight to the most glamorous of shows.

I walked back into the cabin at 3:33AM, exactly three hours later.