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Sonoma County

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SONOMA COUNTY

Jim Metzger

“It’s coming, a calmness of thought. It has to be.” These were often Tom’s words and most certainly always his thoughts. “The critical mass of media cannot sustain its frequency.” So for that we will be grateful, and for Tom’s final wishes, I am grateful too.

A small cluster of our people gathered to wish a fare-thee-well upon our friend, the Grand Mistress, Tom. Tom was departing for somewhere warmer, drier and more evolutionary, perhaps to become a living fossilization of weathered, leathery skin. We were to convene just before 6pm on Saturday and fall into a group meditation. The Mistress was always enforcing some sort of New Age premonition or practice. If only to Tom, we were a community drifting aimlessly on the giant ocean of floating detachment.

I sat away from the action, on a pillow in the sunken foyer. I typically felt like a puppy, included in the action but not fully presentable to the situation. Arriving later than I should have, at 5:53, I chose to sit right before the three quick steps leading up into the sitting room. With so many people already central to Tom, I knew my best option was to avoid disturbing the energy of the main floor.

But yes, of course, at 6:01 Becky and Chalmers entered right on time, her gum snapping and his loose change jangling. The round of people, 31 of us total, silently murmured at the distraction of these two typical truants, moving over the crowd to settle right next to Tom, the importance of their looking important next to Tom was far more important than respecting what Tom represented.

I started grappling with my own choices and realized that even if I had been early, I would have taken the same spot in the sunken foyer, in a reverse ego-play-action to give the impression of suggesting self-aware humility. My refusal to sit anywhere amongst the commingling community, I thought, proved that I was paying more attention to the agenda of the evening rather than to the social function like everyone else. Still, I knew I wasn’t an edge of the puzzle, but rather very much peripheral. And I soon had to admit that I defined myself just as much by my lack of definition, that I was just as much a “part of” Tom’s ministry as everyone else, and nothing less.

Around 6:08, a gas-powered leaf blower revved up outside, resonating frequencies that brought havoc to everyone’s finely balanced chakras. About quarter past I finally fell away, awash within the sea of conscious contradictions and impersonal judgments, swimming the waters of an ocean I wish I could well enough call home all the time. It was becoming easier to float, without grasping, in the sea of lost thoughts.

The twenty minutes ended as it started, too quickly, and people began their whispered tip-toeing back into the space of quiet awareness. Our energy revised, revived, and the group embraced Tom for a final potluck party.

“My name is Jim.” I said to a woman with blonded-gray hair, each strand splaying wildly in protest of maturity.

“I’m Carol.” She replied.

“How did you know Tom?” I asked.

“How did I? You sound like he’s already dead.”

“Tom knows I have no intention of visiting him during his next journey.”

Carol eventually appreciated that my claim made sense, realizing the value of seeing life as a series of never-ending moments and not a trapped, finite condition. Our conversation became a simple, quick match game, discussing the frailties of our human conditions. We passed over intimate topics just as casually as we might discuss the weather.

However, the potential emptiness left from Tom’s departure was quickly remedied with new opportunity, and we both realized we were blessed. Carol learned that my school was 2 blocks from her home and I learned that she was willing to open her backyard, a giant expanse of manicured lawn used for dog agility, to my Physical Education program.

“I teach at a collective, progressive community school of 13 children, ages 10-14.” I said. “We won the property at a government auction. The feds seized the mechanic shop once they realized it was a front for a grow room.”

“Teaching specialized horticulture is definitely progressive.” She replied.

“The only burning herb at The Little Green Schoolhouse was when we saged the fucker to smithereens, after taking ownership three years back.”

We both laughed.

“Its hard to beat the LSD pre-schools of the early Haight.” She said.

“Well, with the state of community nowadays, a stranger opening up her home for a school is just about as outlandish.” I smiled. “Do you have candy trees in the back?”

The energy and light generated from Tom’s fare-thee-well made sure my joke was received as one. Carol described her house. I stopped by to say hello two days later at 3:45. P.E. started on Wednesday.