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“Let me say, at the risk of seeming ridiculous,
that a true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.”

—Che Guevara

He once called it an “ashen paradox.” The road. If questioned, he would explain that the paradox comes in the quality of freedom. One is free on the road, yet one is also confined by isolation. As long as one is okay with this condition, the spirit thrives, the soul dances and howls. Hitching down M-46; past explosions of fall color and clouds of clustering birds, under a robin’s egg sky wrapping its arms around everything in sight, Nagashana was definitely okay.

To keep himself from getting frustrated at how infrequently rides came here as compared to out West, he sang all the songs that one remembers while hitching: “Train Song,” “Me and Bobby McGee,” “Friend of the Devil,” ... Just as he was belting out, “I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knees. Asked the Lord above for mercy-“ somebody showed some, and pulled to the side of the road.

Clyde hovered over the steering wheel of his Mack like he was made to be there and nowhere else. His smile filtered through a winter-weed brown moustache as he extended a large, rough hand to Nagashana.

“Nice to meet ya. Where ya headed?”

“Grand Rapids,” answered Nagashana. “Got to visit and old friend there.”

“A woman?”

Nagashana smiled, “Well, yeah.”

“Then I’ll drive fast,” laughed Clyde, changing gears and shaking his head at himself.

Nagashana shifted the weight of his pack off his left foot and then unzipped his coat a little. “I sure appreciate you picking me up,” he said. “I was running out of songs to sing.”

“Well, that’s okay. You see, it’s just one of my rules.”

Nagashana looked across the seat at Clyde. “What rules?”

Clyde watched something for a moment in his side mirror, and then spoke:

“Clyde’s Five Rules to Live By.”

“And what are they, if you don’t mind my asking?”

“Course not,” said Clyde. “Number One is always talk to strangers. If you don’t, you’d never have any friends. Number Two is always pick up hitchhikers. Lucky for you. Number Three is always give anyone anything they ask for. Everything I have is a gift, and so is meant to be passed on. I just hope nobody ever asks me for my truck. And Number Four is always allow anyone to do you a favor. If you deny someone the chance to be generous, You’re preventing them from improving their soul, and you’re keeping the world one more step away from Heaven.”

Nagashana waited for a moment and then asked, “What about rule number five?”

Clyde laughed again. “Rule Number Five is always be on the lookout for Rule Number Five.”

Nagashana laughed, caught up in this new vagabond angel's spirit. This man obviously possessed some spark of wisdom, but more than that, he possessed a genuine spark of joy. And after all, what good is wisdom without joy? What did Paul say? "If I have this and this and this, but don't have love, I am nothing." Of course, if I have love, I am still nothing – but there are different qualities of nothing. This is nothing and there is Nothing. But what would Clyde say to that vignette? He would laugh and laugh, and that's the real wisdom.

By the glow of the red numbers on the alarm clock, Nagashana explored the outline of the woman sleeping next to him. His eyes caressed each crest and trough, the gentle pitch of deep breathing, the warm contour and mysterious shadows. Earlier that evening, over beer and loud music, she had told him that she was considering getting back together with an ex-boyfriend. Nagashana became a little sad and jealous, even though he had no right to. He half-joked that she didn't need the other guy, she had him. And then her words hurt him only because they were true. She said, "I need somebody to be here more than a few times a year. I need more than you are willing to give."

Another beer, as usual, eased the pain; and now as he lay wide awake while she slept soundly, he wondered why he was so damned elusive. He leaned over and kissed her black hair that lay across her bare shoulder. When his head fell back into the pillow, he realized the issue at work. It wasn't that he couldn't commit. It was that he was committed already to this idea. To the Dance.

He got up quietly and went into the livingroom. Found some paper and a smooth-flowing blue pen, and by the light of a lava lamp, he wrote:

The Ghost Dance Sutra

The changes that are rippling through the Earth like a rising vibration are being felt and perceived by more and more people. They are becoming more accessible, more obvious, less ignorable to those who are afraid of change.

Fewer and fewer of us are satisfied by a merely physical existence. A career, a television, a good fix, superficial conversation of gossip and small talk – these things only sedate or frustrate us. A life beyond this – a deeper and higher perception of reality is necessary. This message of the New Ghost Dance is not new. It is centuries old. Nor is it unique to this understanding: countless people have been speaking of it, using countless names, symbols, and images to describe it. The difference that makes it utterly significant now is that no longer is this reality restricted to visionaries, shamans, monks, and messiahs. It is now being picked up by people of every walk, every background, every level of understanding. The Music of Renewal is resonating from every city and village, every tree and stone, every meeting of two people. And when the music grows strong, we begin to dance.

The Renewal is inevitable – as inevitable as any natural change. Something born will always grow, always evolve, always be transformed from one stage to the next. Each change, whatever the level, is accompanied by pain, violence, difficulty as well as love, beauty, courage. It is up to each person to decide what levels these things will rise to.

The most important thing each of us can do right now is to prepare ourselves to dance – to become immersed in the Music – to let nothing distract us from its rhythm. We must see ourselves constantly as a traveler on the path – as a Dancer in the Circle, and make every decision, respond to every circumstance, communicate with every person met, accordingly.

The role of the Dancer is something like the role of the midwife: we must be there to ease the pain of birth, to help nurture the infant.

But the Dancer is also a warrior. A warrior is only victorious when he or she conquers the self. To dance for the Earth requires bravery, commitment, and selflessness. It requires a razor-sharp focus, like the edge of a flame. This is what a Ghost Dancer must become. His other weapons are love and synchronism with the flow of Life. Without maintaining these weapons in perfect condition and practicing their use diligently, a warrior is easily defeated. These weapons are honed by communion with other dancers and immersion into the interconnected beauty and power of the natural world.

Nagashana felt a little closer to understanding this thing, but he wondered just how it could become a novel. How could he get to the idea, the essence, the bones of it all: and still tell a story? A full-chested yawn interrupted his thoughts. He stuffed the papers into his satchel and went back to bed. As he lay down, the sleeping woman turned and nestled into his shoulder. Having written, he was more relaxed. His mind was relieved of a tension like the feeling in a hen house after the fox has fallen asleep far away. With her breath gently riding across his face, he slipped into easy, welcome dreams.

In the morning, as a surprise to the both of them, they made love. All the distance and regret was forgotten, erased by the electricity of skin and tongues, lost in the fog of holy passion. Later, as she dropped him off at the entrance to the highway, she held him for a long time and then said, "Write for me."

"I always do." he answered. "I always do."