

All Aboard the Thought Train, Cosmic to Mundane

Written by Alex Baer

Tuesday, 15 April 2014 21:14 - Last Updated Tuesday, 15 April 2014 22:35

It was a night like any other. I simply wasn't expecting to lose sleep. It just turned out that way. See, I wasn't out for blood -- hadn't even thought about it until the Internet brought it up in our evening exchanges, smug as ever, buffing its know-it-all buffer on my server, simultaneously pouty and coquettish, impossible to ignore.

Sometimes, you take a chance and you hop a thought train, not knowing where you might end up, or how you might feel when it's all over. I was restless. I took a chance. And now, having ridden that train of thought all up and down the line, I'm still not sure how I feel about it -- how it all worked out, I mean.

The thing is: I might have used those hours for something else. I know, I know -- it's not like I was going to give Einstein a run for the money last night. It's not like I would have written Beethoven's Tenth or anything. Regrets are just part of the bittersweet terrain, when the moon is full, its light so bright, and the night so clear you swear you can feel the frosty moonlight thinly ice the air.

It was supposed to be blood red, they said, or at least a rusty orange, maybe -- a kiss of sunlight bent through our upper air -- during its processional march and slide, losing and then regaining slim fingernail clippings of its curvature at a time, shedding and regrowing a new satellite skin from within as it goes.

The light, bright enough to paint by, slips and dims as the eclipse dances through its arc. I had forgotten how spectacular is the loss of that familiar, high-beamed, sky night-light when it's inexplicably dimmed. It is now easy to find the feeling of how early peoples were fooled or frightened, or how those flirtations with sky-dance drew their eyes, their imaginations, their curiosities, their energies to find out *how*, or to get closer to *why*.

I had last seen such a moon dance as a kid, when my photographer dad took timed exposures on one frame, over and over, evenly spaced, later producing the miracle of moons -- one, our own, caught in a periodic pirouette, step by step.

The night was colder as it unfolded, more chill than I had imagined for early spring. I am out of

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practice, staying up late in the cool starlight for such cosmic conversations, and for such quaint commiseration by the moon, chuckling down on our upward, wondering gaze.

My body winces some today, complaining of lost sleep and of my sluggish shifting contortions and slow strainings-around in a chair, trying to keep the bright orb in view out a back window, just so, slunking down in a seat, craning around like a half-frozen sunflower in amber, invisibly and nearly motionless, trying to track the shining light from that familiar old man in the moon.

There was no blood, no orange light -- no blood oranges from the moon. Not from here. Just as well, I guess I have now decided. After all, there was none at the lake, all those summers ago, when the camera methodically ticked, tocked, and clicked at the clock timing, up on the tripod, when it shimmied and shuddered some at the shutter release, snapping to capture moonlight in mid-flight.

My mind insists on thinking about the memory, as if taken down in a dusty, dented brainbox from a shelf in my skull, a box labelled *Snapdragon Moon*. In my mind's eye, a shimmering silver light still peeks up through the edges of the box, flush with teasing promise.

Epilogue

Today came after all, and it was real again, despite last night's surreal eclipse. Sunlight always scatters hazy dreamlike states, I find -- sleep or no sleep. Sunlight also scattered me into action, from slothfully and gleefully granting the celestial heavens their due, and now, in all newfound gravity, forcing me forward to give Caesar his due now, as well.

On April 14th, yesterday, and yesternight, there was time to dawdle and consider the dark and the light; today, on the Ides of April, the time-date stamp waits for no tax filer, woman or man, moon or no moon.

It is a terrible thing, losing moonlight, but reality steps in and repossesses anyway, and with all the unpoetic, regretful grace of a clanking, shrugging tow-truck's hook-up, carting off a car with too many unpaid moons under its timing belt.

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It is a moment suggesting a chrome bumper dragged on concrete, sparking into the night, challenging the pinprick light of the stars.

It is a terrible thing, owing something very powerful indeed, and being so embarrassingly, flimsily *broke*.

And yet...

And yet, today, I see where Saturn may be in the birth throes of a brand new moon in its banded, belted disc. It is being temporarily called Peggy, about to join 53 of its current spherical siblings -- with nine more pending paternity tests and further familial exhortations. One hopes the newly birthed babe-in-arms will not be lost in the shuffle and bustle of such a large, swirling family.

* * * * *

(Would anyone remember phonograph records? □ Would anyone remember seeing those vinyl tracks in strong light, looking for all the world like Saturn's halos? □ Would anyone understand the reference of the snap, crackle, pop of impurities in those sonic album rings as being referred to as stardust in the grooves of the records? The dreamy, drowsy effects of eclipse can continue, even in daylight, it seems...)

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I am not sure I thoroughly approve of *Peggy* as a family name, though, no more than I would approve of *Bobby* as meeting the minimum majestic requirement of a point in space so sublimely grand...

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... unless, of course, you might be referring to the *Music of the Spheres*.

Or to the equally amazing, and equally silky and stunning, voice of *Ms. Lee* -- particularly in deep and heavy orbit from
Fever

.

I understand the spinning feeling, Peggy: You sing from a place where I hear and feel deep space, and imagine a brightness amongst the infinity dark.

You see, I have also decided something else today, that it was a very worthwhile night -- from the cosmic, and the *Fever*, and from free-floating Coltrane to the mud-puddle mundane.

But, you know, even the daylight's OK, today.

Taxes and all.

Eclipse: <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-27026339>

Moon man: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_in_the_Moon

Beethoven, et al: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beethoven%27s_Ninth

and: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_of_the_ninth

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Saturn's Peggy: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/04/15/303388885/saturn-might-have-a-new-baby-moon-named-peggy>

Music of those Spheres: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_the_spheres

Today's Orbital Bonuses:

Fever's Peggy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGb5lweiYG8>

Cool warmth ala Coltrane: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA1EZAQCq4Y>