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Fuzzy Californian Rhapsody

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Rebellious late teens, and baked. Raccoon eyes, hair that was bleached halfassed. Put the weed in the vaporizer. But don’t get it too close to the fuse otherwise you’ll burn it all, burn it all

Pass it here, you’re taking all of it.

Shut the fuck up dipshit, you’re just high, it’s only been two minutes.

Midwestern early summer humidity. Cicadas buzzing to mask the sound of kids coughing laughing dying. Trying to fight the inevitability of time by slowing it as much as possible. Never growing up, never growing up

Hey turn that shit up.

Turn that shit up.

Bitch shut up and smoke.

Turn that shit up

Hop into the pool and look at the sky. So hazy. So white. The infinite collision of warm chlorine water with chilled night air adding its contribution to the fog that embraces you as a brother and never lets go. You drift around and forget where you are. I’m melting out of my own body. One guy takes off his boxers and runs off into the forest naked. Laughing, Laughing

Let’s watch a movie, you and me.

*What should we watch?*

How about this one with the white guy pointing a gun at us?
No I want to watch this one more.

But that one is just another white guy pointing a gun at us.

Oh

The childish twangs of a ukulele in the background. There’s always one fucking guy that has to play the ukulele or guitar all night like he’s the next Kurt Cobain, a martyr motherfucker who’s so into what he does that he has to play while the rest of us are slouching about, trying to find a bag of Fritos around the house or something

Who’s playing the ukulele

Turn that shit down

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Uh, one thing ‘bout music, when it hit you feel no pain

White folks say it controls your brain

I grew out of smoking weed a long time ago, maybe three years or so. One thing is that I finally started to understand the concept of money; weed in terms of standard street price is over twice as expensive in Chicago as what you can find in California. Also, I was starting to realize that I was now an adult and in order to be part of a functioning society, I had to grow up. I guess weed fell in the category of one of those childish habits that I threw out of my life. The world was now a scary place; just a few months after turning eighteen, I read an article about one of my classmates at school that got arrested because he had sex with a thirteen year old girl at some fast food joint and ended up giving her gonorrhea. He barely took a step into the world and shot himself in the foot. Of course, smoking some marijuana is nowhere near as damaging as the act of rape, but likewise my liability (or lack thereof) was nowhere near the same league with some of my wealthier
suburbanites who could have their parents bail them out of the frozen parts of Dante’s *Inferno* if they wanted to.

Look, don’t nobody look like that, nobody even live like that, you know what I’m saying? You watching garbage, nothing but garbage, straight up garbage

Yo, why don’t you just back up from the TV, read a book or something

Read about yourself, learn your culture, you know what I’m saying?

She watch Channel Zero

She watch

She watch

She watch

After I stopped smoking, I felt that I needed something else to fill up my life and seriously took up the Korean sect of Buddhism known as Won Buddhism to learn about spirituality. The monks at the temple back home in Chicago used to tell me that meditation can be done at any point in someone’s day and not just sitting down. Supposedly, I can meditate even when I eat. Even when I walk. Even when I’m trying to take a piss in the city and some homeless guy is staring at my junk from the next stall over. Okay, then.

But the Midwest isn’t necessarily the Mecca for Won Buddhism—the East and West Coasts are. That’s why I visited the temple in Oakland during the summer after graduation, because something about monks and their lifestyles intrigued me. I wanted to know how they integrated themselves into a world that I found to be so materialistic and commoditizing. I wanted to know how they seemed to be so invulnerable to the happenings of the world and most importantly, how the hell they did it without taking drugs. Seriously, talking to one of
them is like talking to a Pillsbury Doughboy; you could poke them in the god damn eye and they’ll just laugh in your face.

“Tee hee!”

I went in there with this figurative mentality that I would show up and be immediately dressed in a brown robe and sent through training to harden my resilience. Maybe some wrinkly green midget would throw me a lightsaber or something and tell me to use the force while kicking my ass with his tiny green feet. Instead, the monk’s mother, who was also a very highly esteemed Buddhist priestess, led me to a room about twice the size of a closet and introduced me to what life would be like for the next month.

“The morning prayer bell rings at fivethirty.”

Shit.

I want you to do me a favor. Stop reading this story and go sit down somewhere comfortable. Look up the halflotus position if you don’t know what it is, and keep your back arched completely straight while relaxing your shoulders. Tuck your chin inwards. Put your hands on your knees with palms facing up, and then pause—

For five minutes.

What distracts you? Maybe a fly on the window, or a few cars driving by, or (since this was in Oakland) a few popping sounds of distant gunshots.

My initial reaction was, of course, shame. These monks probably thought that I was just another Westernized and ignorant boy, but they actually encouraged me to acknowledge my distractions. Getting rid of distractions is the ultimate goal, they say, but for beginners it is the process of enveloping even the smallest details of the environment within the conscious mind that leads one to true meditation.
Alright, how about meditating for ten minutes now?

Fifteen?

Yeah, you get the point. In my case, it was five hours. Every day. For a month. No meats, no American food loaded with grease, but a consistent supply of fresh mountain roots, white rice, and barley tea.

It was maybe a couple weeks in before my mind journal, a notebook in which I had written about my experience up to that point, degraded into doodles of some fried chicken and Chipotle burritos. I nearly went insane.

Actually, I did go insane. I cracked one day in the middle of cleaning the temple and snuck out to grab some Taco Bell. I’m normally grossed out by Taco Bell but, let me tell you, it was the first time where I genuinely worshipped the food that was in front of me. A bunch of shitty, add hot water to make artificial meat tacos. Delicious.

Aside from the small blips here and there, it was an amazing experience. I’m usually a late-night, sleep-in kind of guy, but waking up at five in the morning makes you appreciate how much longer your day becomes, and the simultaneous meditation training only helps in turning you into a much more productive person. There’s nothing more rewarding and beautiful while sweeping the cracked sidewalks of the temple than watching the Bay Area fog slowly dissipate as white children and and black children and purple children and iridescent children gather to play soccer in the open fields of tattered Oakland grass. That is, after all, how I fell in love with a state named California; I promised myself that I would choose this place for my undergraduate education ever since.

I came back as a relatively changed person, although it’s hard to explain how I’ve changed other than the fact that I felt like I had WOKEN UP. It was funny as hell to say the least to watch the bewildered face of my 어머니 as I asked for her to buy five pounds of roasted barley tea mixture for me.
“My 아들’s become an old man,” was all she had to say about that.

We enlist every instrument: Acoustic, electronic

Every so-called race, gender, and sexual preference

Every per-son as beings of sound to acknowledge their responsibility to

Uplift the consciousness of the entire fucking World

Admittedly, I do miss the stoner days from time to time. Where I would float on my back and ascend to otherworldly dimensions. I would take a hit and feel the choking accumulation of salty vapors in the roof my mouth. You cough so much and so hard that all your blood vessels expand and take in so much THC that suddenly you’re laughing at the sound of your own laughter. The fog never clears. Turn that song up. I can’t hear over the fucking ukulele guy. Turn it up—

**HEY YOU FUCKING KIDS BETTER CUT THAT SHIT OUT**

Oh shit

Turn that shit down man

Oh fuck

Laugh

Run