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DREAM OF DEATH & THE WAY OF THE SHAMAN

By David Sparenberg

Old ones came to me and cried out, “Wake up! Get to your feet. Come with us now. Hurry, for God’s sake. Look into the circle, everywhere, point by point. Urgent: she is dying!”

Out of fear I peered into the mystic and out of bewilderment, tremulous, I replied, “What does God have to do with this?”

One of the elders answered in voice distraught, “Everything. God’s anguish is beyond the boundaries, even beyond the horizons of human thought, feeling, emotions. Should she die, God’s suffering will be boundless, ineffable—a suffering both infinite and eternal. We speak here of a wild god. Yet, perhaps, as akin as microcosm is to macrocosm to your own bereavement should you lose to death your bride, your beloved, the peerless living jewel of your thundering heart and envisioning soul.”

Then again in chorus the old ones cried aloud, “Awaken! Stand. Be quick. The need is pressing and excuses are but denials playing into the ubiquitous power of the degrees of death. Know—she is dying! Why then do you delay?”

How terrible here was my fear, how profuse the sweat chilling my confused flesh; how bewildering the horror of this midnight summons, disturbing me out of mind in that anguished swelter of light eclipsing and devouring darkness!

But next one of the elders revealed his face from out the encompassing night and spoke his desperate, revelatory declaration: “Spirits wander about this time, coming to each and all living, to plead with a singular message and let you know that we too are afraid. We who have nothing to fear of death, fear this impending death. So profound was and is our love. Yet we are weak now beyond these gossamer apparitions and faint beyond this haunt of breathless words.”

In the passage of a moment, writhing like a ragged cloth in wind and rain, the ancient added, “So upon you, you and none other, does the ultimate rest: shall she live or die?”

Whereupon on third occasion, in pleading hurt and outrage, the united voices of the old ones cried, “Wake up! Rise to noble height, deep rooting into ageless instincts. Acts of beauty are required and your love is the holy medicine of this hour. Only hasten. Take nothing with you from the industries of men and give no thought to tomorrow more than that the dawn is guaranteed in floral light and bird song.

“Now is the presence and now the power. As it now that she is dying and extinction is threatened to the womb of life and time. Now too, upon the pin point of decision, is the hour of healing.”

Forthwith my eyes opened with pathos and sanity, and I awoke with my face a field of rain and the drumming hard of my anguished and repentant heart. That without physical hesitation or

mental reservation, but feet together on the ground, I walked out into and through the insecurity and uncertainty of darkness, determined to move toward a renaissance of light. For once awakened and alert I understood that my dream was a dream of sacred poetry and my dream a dream of holy prayer.

For I had here, through visitation, a sense within of my part in healing the Earth. For Earth, she who is mother to all living and bride to God of creation, is dying. Yet her death cannot happen—this must not be.

Here then is a dream of death that is a speaking truth and here then what follows is the way of the shaman and the warrior's choice, opposing death. For life is in the blood as in the breath, and both blood and breath are common.

Tell me this: In a narrative universe such as this of consciousness, if a person uses a story to tell a truth is not the story part of the truth being told? And what is such storytelling but remembrance and what is the narrative of mythic memory but the shaman's dream as story come again to offer guidance?