

## **I Am the Lighthouse Keeper**

The other day, in the morning, I was doing some yoga, just some simple stretches in the sunlight, to start my day. Another guy saw me, and when I approached him, he told me how he was feeling uplifted watching me. He told me how his energy was low, but after seeing me glow, he felt good. It was a very positive interaction. Also, he was listening to some Christian rap music on a speaker, which actually sounded really cool!

Social contagion is real. What I mean by this is, you can pick up the energy of other people around you. When I see somebody slouched, bent over, head down, I can feel the negative energy in the air. It's easy for other people's energy to rub off onto yours, and so I believe it's important to surround yourself with more positive, gay, jolly, and strong people. In these uncertain times, where drama, negativity, and bad news fill the air, I say we should strike through the darkness like a lighthouse, as a beam of light.

## **Man VS Nature**

A few months ago, along the Schuylkill River Banks, the boardwalk here in Philadelphia, I hopped over the fence and was trying to explore underneath it. I saw a bunch of cool rocks, I wanted to grab one and throw it in the river. However, when I went to grab the rock, there were a bunch of weeds growing in between them, which apparently I later found out were called stinging nettle, and they rubbed my skin. When I went home, I rinsed myself off, took a shower, and woke up the next day with extremely itchy rashes on my wrists. I made sure to apply some Cortizone cream for the next few days, but the pain was insane and required me to train my mind and my body to resist the temptation to itch.

About 2 1/2 weeks ago, I was pruning some trees, which were overflowing with these suckers and weeds everywhere. I needed to clean this tree because it was just so beautiful, and these suckers are like leeches, draining the energy from this

source of life. However, the next day, I looked at my wrist and saw that I contracted poison ivy. I've never had poison ivy or any of these funny rashes from nature before, not even when I was a kid, exploring out in the woods endlessly.

Nature is violent. I remember walking through Rittenhouse Square Park, and seeing a hawk swoop down from the tree, eating a baby bird in midflight. All I saw from the scene were a few feathers falling to the ground. The plants are violent, the insects are violent, and the animals show no mercy. There is a hierarchy in nature, and the most dominant, with the most will to power, shall win. However, when it comes to nature, perhaps it is foolish to try and tame it.

I'll never forget being a young boy, where I spent my youth, in Longport, New Jersey, playing on the beach all day during the summer. My grandmother would lounge on her chair, tanning her skin, and enjoy her watermelon and an Italian hoagie. However, the seagulls would always swarm us, and I remember one time a seagull snatched the hoagie straight from her mouth! The seagulls and nature have no idea of right or wrong. Nature shows no mercy and always gets what she desires.

I love starting my day off with a walk along the river here in Philadelphia and find myself at an elevated view, standing at the edge of a cliff, behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I love looking out towards the horizon, the water, and the tree canopy in the farthest. It reminds me of how open this world is and how much there is to do and explore. The act of standing on the cliff, with my feet as close to the edge as possible, is quite foolish. The wind could push from the left or right of me, or even behind me, and knock me forward, falling to the ground, bashing my head against the cliff, maybe breaking some bones, or even dying. Maybe some worms would start to eat my body as I decompose, and that's the cycle of life.

*"You are not special. You are not a beautiful or unique snowflake. You're the same decaying organic matter as everything else. We are all part of the same compost heap." - Tyler Durden*

Think of a goat, and the way they graze upon the cliff sides. When an eagle kills a goat, it uses the easiest method possible. The eagle simply swoops down and knocks the goat off the cliff. When the goat falls and dies, the eagle comes down and has its feast.

Humans may be the most strong, apex predator, with technology, weapons, medicine, etc., but the more we fight against mother nature, the more it will fight against us. We could use our nuclear weapons and destroy this world if we truly wanted to. Perhaps we are like the eagle and use the easiest method possible to kill, with guns, missiles, drones, and nuclear weapons.

*Have you ever stood on the shoreline and looked out towards the ocean?*

This is one of the most beautiful sights you can witness in life, as the horizon seems endless, and the ocean is so open. It's very inspiring to stand on the beach, with the water crashing before your feet. However, the ocean is scary.

I remember it took a lot of time for me to overcome the fear of the ocean when I was a young boy. I saw one of my friends get stung by a jellyfish, and there were lots of crabs crawling around. I found comfort in the warm sand, by the entrance of the beach, digging holes, making sand castles. But once I met a group of boys, and had a band of brothers or friends with me, we would all go out into the ocean together, boogie boarding, bodyboarding, and just riding the waves with rafts. We would go out there when there was a red flag, and the waves would crash fiercely. It was exhilarating to ride the waves. Once I got a surfboard and attempted to go out deeper, I regretted my decision. The ocean was pulling me back further and further away from the shoreline, and there was an undertow. A lifeguard actually had to come out and save me because I was so small, and the ocean was so strong, that I could not paddle back to the shoreline. Needless to say, I became much more into skimboarding along the shoreline, and avoiding surfing from there on.

While it is important to be dangerous, courageous, and overcome your fears, perhaps nature will always teach us a lesson.

*However, if Mother Nature is queen of the universe, should we truly worship her? **I'd say not, and just leave her alone.***

**Nature is both beautiful and ugly.**

The seeds start to bloom into beautiful flowers, but over some time, they wither away, and decay, back down into the ground. It is important to recognize the cycle of nature, with growth, death, and rebirth. We should not fear nature but rather

recognize our role within nature.

We are nature. We are the world. We are the universe. We are the cocoon, the caterpillar, and the butterfly. We are workers, like the ants, dancers, like the birds, and predators, like the lions.

*We are the lighthouse and the lighthouse keeper, along the shoreline of the vast ocean, shining brightly in the dark unknown.*

### **Humans Are Like Zoo Animals?**

Maybe humans are becoming like domesticated dogs. But what I find funny about the way that we domesticate dogs is that they are very fierce in nature. Dogs were once wolves, but then found a campfire, with some guys chilling, we decided to cuddle up with it, and make it our friend. When I spent time in the West Bank, exploring all the various Palestinian cities, I noticed how they use dogs. Dogs are used as predators, security, and guards. They chain them up inside, muzzle their mouths, and hardly feed them. They use their dogs for war games and attack.

Perhaps humans too are like these dogs, or wolves, fierce and capable of doing harm. Think of Hercules, descending to Hades, to conquer Cerberus, the three-headed dog. Or even Harry Potter, in the Chamber of Secrets, before he descended into hell, to fight the basilisk. He had to tame these dogs, by putting them to sleep, before slaying the beast underneath.

I feel as though humans are like these dogs from Harry Potter, asleep, tamed, and the beast within us has been killed. We prefer comfort and pleasure through all of our hedonistic pursuits. We look for the easy route and enjoy our routine. The cool air conditioner on a hot summer day, and the four corners of a room, are soothing and make us feel good. Humans shouldn't feel good all of the time. We must endure pain, and suffering, and overcome ourselves in order to be free.

## **Design Your Character**

Have you ever played a video game, an open-world, adventure, RPG, such as Skyrim? In the very beginning of the game, your character is naked, and you design him from the ground up. You choose your body type, eye color, size, shape, etc. Maybe we should go back to the beginning stage of the video game and design our real-life character in reality, too.

### **Go Discalced**

*The term “discalced” comes from the Latin word “discalceatus,” which is a combination of “dis-” (a prefix meaning “apart” or “away”) and “calceatus” (meaning “shod” or “wearing shoes”). “Calceatus” itself comes from “calceus,” meaning “shoe.” Therefore, “discalced” literally means “unshod” or “without shoes.”*

I think the first step to redesigning ourselves quite literally does start from the ground up. By removing your shoes, and going barefoot, you reconnect with our natural way of being. I’ve been wearing the Vibram FiveFingers ELX shoes for around a year and a half now, and I cannot see myself going back to normal shoes. I feel way more comfortable and natural feel the sensations of the ground below me, strengthening my legs, my feet, and my posture. My thought is, these big, rubber soles, between us and the ground, are weakening our physical bodies. Let us design our character from the ground up, remove the shoes, and become the strongest and best versions of ourselves.

## **The Ultimate Goal of Humanity?**

So I live in a building here in Philadelphia with 99% elderly people residing in it. A lot of the times when I’m on the elevator, I have conversations with them about their grandchildren, and how happy they make them. Perhaps grandchildren become the fountain of youth for the elderly, a source of vitality and hope for the future.

It is quite obvious that we live in a world with a population on the decline. When I walk through the streets of Philadelphia, I notice way more single people with dogs than children. So what can we do about this? What do we young men have to think more critically about?

*The word "semen" has its origins in Latin, where it directly translates to "seed." In Latin, "semen" is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root \*sē-, which also means "to sow" or "to plant." This root is the source of various related words in different languages, all pertaining to seeds or the act of sowing. In English, the term has been used since the 14th century to refer to the reproductive fluid containing spermatozoa in males, reflecting its original sense of something that can generate new life.*

We should strive to either generate new life or generate new art. These two options are the choices we have to give life deeper meaning. Go inward and ignore the external hedonistic distractions of modern life. Learn to overcome yourself. Don't blow your semen or power.

*Maybe we should just wait until marriage before having sex?*

If the ultimate goal of humanity is to form families and generate new life, let's become super critical about this and choose how we decide to use our ultimate source of vitality and power as men. Let's set new virtues, or rather, just restore old ones, and return to tradition, for the sake of humanity.

### **Focus Right Away in the Morning**

Every morning, I slam four espressos at 4 AM, and get right outside. I think this is the best routine for me, as I truly thrive out on a walk. As soon as I start walking, it's much easier for me to think, write, and make my videos. As a street photographer, our ultimate goal should be movement, and walking throughout the day as much as possible. Because of this, I tend to get out there right away and make pictures along the river trail. While I walk the same lane every single day, in this seemingly mundane fashion, I find beauty in it. This walk brings me focus and clarity as I reach the peak of the cliff, behind the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and look out at the horizon from an elevated view.

*"You cannot step in the same river twice." - Heraclitus*

When I look out at the landscape, this beautiful vista, I make a photograph. When I make this photograph, every single day, I remind myself that you cannot make the same photograph twice. The light, and the way that it casts upon the surfaces, giving shape and form to places, faces, and things, intrigues me as a photographer. Because of the power of light, nothing ever stays the same. The sun is the omnipotent power, that allows nature to bloom, and also provides us with the endless canvas to photograph upon. You can visit the same location every single day, but a photograph that you make there will never be the same. Embrace the change of light, and simply follow it.

Focus as soon as you wake up. Become the creator.

*Fiat Lux.*

*Let there be light!*

## **Excelsior**

Most music is dark these days. The lyrics are negative, the beats are lonely, and the culture surrounding it is degenerate. One thing I've been doing for the past two years is making an effort to listen to the Wanamaker Organ at the Macy's building here in Philadelphia, every day at 5:30 PM. There's a free show that lasts around a half-hour to 45 minutes for the public, every day except for Sunday, at 12 and 5:30, twice per day. I've made an effort to detox from music, and only listen to it during this particular part of my day.

While walking around the Wanamaker building yesterday, I noticed these beautiful plaques depicting the original 13 colonies and their mottos. One in particular, New York's, read, "Excelsior."

*"Excelsior" is a Latin word meaning "higher" or "loftier." It is derived from the Latin word "excelsus," which means "high" or "elevated." The word "excelsior" is often used to convey a sense of striving for higher goals or reaching for excellence.*

When I listen to the Wanamaker Organ, which is the world's largest playing pipe organ, the music vibrates throughout the entire building. The building has a very tall ceiling, and the organ is positioned at an elevated spot that requires the listener to look up at it. I believe that architecture, sculpture, and music are the apex of art. When you step in front of the beautiful eagle statue, thousands of feathers, rock by hand, built of bronze, in the center of the building, gaze up at the high ceiling, and listen to the music that sounds from the organ, it uplifts your soul to a transcendental height.

*The goal of art is to uplift the human spirit, to elevate, and to transcend this world.*

I believe that the Wanamaker Organ is one of mankind's greatest artistic achievements, and I'm very grateful to have a place like this in my city to listen to music. One day, they even displayed a silent black and white Charlie Chaplin film upon a projector, just below the organ, and synced the music to the movie.

When I was a child, I would sit at the Eagle and watch the late show every Christmas season. My grandmother also worked in this building, in the beauty department. When I listen to the organ, I think to myself that my grandmother probably listened to this too when she was alive. Art has the capability of fueling your soul with vitality and resonates with the listener, or the viewer, on a deep and emotional level.

If you ever want to listen to the organ with me, just join me at 5:30 PM at the Eagle statue!