

Candle Illumination

by TJ Skarbo

Mint upon my palate, I rub sleep infused eyes and crawl under the covers. Oh blessed sleep, please descend upon this body and transverse this fatigue. Eyes closed, bring a wavering blackness upon subtle lids. The conversation begins...

"I am worried about the candle."

"Do not fear my child; you have put the metal cookie sheet beneath it. Even if it were to tumble your thoughtfulness will save the house."

"Are you sure it will be enough?" Brows arch.

"Come now, it is time for the lessons."

"The book says we should concentrate on the candle, try to become the candle, what ever that means." Disbelief hung in the air.

"Observe the candle. Tell me what you see."

"I see a white candle made of wax with a flame above it. What else is there to a candle?"

"Surely this is not all that your eyes bring to you, look deeper and broaden your mind." His gentle smile coaxing.

"The candle is not doing anything that I can see, except perhaps illuminating with the flames light. It is the flame that moves and dances in the slight breeze. It consumes the air and the wick. It is emitting light and heat. The candle is allowing this as the heat melts the wax and gives the flame more wick to consume. If you

count the candles allowing nature, I suppose it is doing something.”

“Yes, continue to observe. What is this process teaching you?”

Brows knit in concentration. “In a way it is as though the candle has a life of sorts. Its age is that of its use. Just as we have, it has a birth, and with use a middle age. Once spent; a death. It gives birth to the flame, nourishing it.”

“Exactly, we are more like this candle than you know. It sits before us doing what it does best, giving light and heat to those who wish to use it. It is perfect in its simplicity; it does exactly what is required. Nothing more, nothing less, yet leaves nothing undone. It does not wish to be anything other than what it is. Imagine what freedom we could have if only we knew and lived this secret.” A pregnant pause hung between them.

“I suppose...but you are forgetting that we are not as simple as a candle. Our complexities and our emotions, although a burden at times, are also what separate us from all other forms of life. Should this not be celebrated?”

“It is and it should be celebrated, but it also blinds our minds eye with the cataracts of confusion. We become like cattle in a monsoon, stuck in a quagmire of selfish impulses. We, like the cattle, know the nature of the mud, yet we are still drawn to it instead of staying clear of what know to be a yoke. Does this sound like the thought of a clear mind?”

“So how do we cleanse the mind? How do we gain clarity?”

“Some say that meditation can bring a sense of clarity.”

“Some say? So this is not your thinking then?”

"I think this is too simplistic. Yes, a period of meditation is needed to quiet the mind and still the soul. It can only be a good path for one seeking spiritual illumination. However I think much more is needed then this simple recipe. One must have the eyes in the head and the eyes of the spirit open at all times. This is needed if one is to observe the world, its ways, and learn the lessons given through out the day. How else is one to observe the heartbeat of life?" Silence grows as they concentrate on the candle. She is next to speak.

"So which would you say is of more importance, the candle or the flame?"

"In my mind there is no distinguishing the value between the two. You can have the candle without the flame; it just ceases to be as useful. In this instance, the flame cannot exist without the candle. The flame is dependant on the candle. When the wick is consumed in its entirety the flame too shall be consumed."

"Where does the flame go?"

He smiles and gives her a wink. "Now you are opening your mind. These are the questions to ponder. If I knew where the energy of a flame or a soul went after death, I would be a great master who would burst forth in hundreds of rainbows at the time of mine."

He chuckles, and his eyes become happy upside down smiles...

