

Let the Moment Control

“It’s called living in the moment,” Dave said with a twitch. “Kind of like a meditation book.”

Ryan continued to text and kept himself a few paces ahead of Dave, keeping his head down and looking back only to avoid the frigid stabs of November air which threatened to cut his already emaciated and hollow-sunken face.

“It’s cool, actually. Carey recommended it to me a few years ago, and I figured I wasn’t in a position to say no. It’s really a book for the New York City single guy, you know?”

Ryan hastened his pace and finished the text. *“What does it say?”*

Dave stared with sugar-glazed eyes into the 24-hour Diner, looking for the Grade and stroking his patchwork goatee.

“What it says is, and Carey said this too, is that we have a hard time enjoying what we have here and now. We’re always looking forward to the next thing, backwards to what we had, what we want, or what we could have had, you know? Basically, we just can’t enjoy what we have or who we are with in the moment. We’re always looking to go to the next bar, the next party, the next group of people, the next, you know, ‘thing’, like when I stopped texting that smoke-show because she wasn’t a good fuck – I’m always looking to see if there are any other prospects out there. And on top of it all, we’re worrying. Worrying worrying worrying, hoping things will turn out fun that night, hoping the plans will go through and you’ll meet someone instead of just standing on your own in the corner next to the loser wall flowers. And meanwhile, while you worry and work yourself up and make a big thing about the night and what has to happen, you’re with your friends! You’re with the people you should be enjoying your time with! Why do we do this? I’m kind of tired of it, you know?”

The wind was relentless, with no hint of salvation in sight. Two overstuffed men dressed in Notre Dame Jerseys were going at each other in the near distance just outside Joshua Tree, while the Bouncer and some well-clad girls cheered on their respective sides.

Ryan glanced over at his friend, who was filling the dead air space by whistling a pop tune and fist pumping to the invisible jam. Ryan waited until he opened up his phone.

“And you feel this way.”

He caught him mid-text. “Yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, it’s like, I feel that wherever I am, I’m thinking about the next thing. Like I was cross-country skiing with Bill last weekend on this mountain in Vermont, forget the name of it now, but definitely in Vermont. It was a beautiful mountain – great trails, hilly, but super-awesome. Anyway, we’re making our way up this beautiful mountain at a chill pace, taking pictures of the snow-covered ferns and rabbits and deer scampering around, just really trying to take it all in, but I just kept thinking about this girl Stacy, one of Matt’s friends, and what I was going to do when I got back. You know, like, my game plan to slay her. And then suddenly I tripped over a huge fucking root covered by the snow, and at that point I started worrying about the descent down, and how hard it was going to be to climb back down from the top, how I hadn’t gone cross-country skiing since high school and didn’t have that kind of stamina anymore, how Bill once slipped and broke his leg at Bear-Creek Mountain. It was frustrating. And then when I got over that, I started thinking about Stacy again!”

But then once we made it to the very top, you know, where there’s nothing but clouds and just, you know, nothing, I took a deep breath. That’s what the book says – to breathe deeply, so you can just kind of empty your head. And that’s what I did. Inhale from the diaphragm, like this, hold it, and breathe out, kind of like Tai Chi or Yoga, or Pilates. Then, just stare, wherever you are, whatever you’re looking at, just stare. Then, while you’re staring, tell yourself, ‘I am in the moment, this is it. This is happening. I am alive.’ ‘I am in the moment.

This is it. This is happening. I am alive'...'I am in the moment, this is it. This is happening. I am alive'. Three times, then breathe again. I said this phrase in my head while we were just standing there, and I swear, Ryan, even though I was staring into a swirling fog in sub-10 degree weather, the wind whipping my jacket every which way and mercilessly burning my face, the snow falling in between my jacket and neck and slipping down my back, I swear, I enjoyed that moment more than I have any other in years."

Ryan let a moment go by and allowed the silence to judge his friend's newfound wisdom. It was unforgiving, as usual.

"You know, Ryan? I really feel like I could live by this. Really!"

He now had his cue from the silence's decision, and with an unshakable cool took out his cigarette and placed it on the tip of his mouth, on the verge of death.

"I hear you, Dave."

He took out his lighter.

"This shit sounds really good."

He cupped his hands around his cigarette.

"I'm happy for you."

And lit it with one meaningful flick.

"In fact, I think it would be a good idea to go see Carey before we go to the bar."

Dave looked down and scratched his head. *"We're supposed to be at Joshua Tree by 10."*

"I understand, but it's only 9:45pm, and we haven't seen Carey in a while. You know he's about ten minutes away. We can chill there, then go." He exhaled – now the smoke would be the judge, jury and

executioner.

Dave looked both ways in the middle of the sidewalk, enveloped in a trance-like state of child-stricken panic, but just as he was building up steam for his temper tantrum he allowed his hands to drop dead by his sides and proceeded to do the deep breathing he had been so fond of just moments before.

“Ok, yeah. We can go for a drink, one drink. I haven’t seen the kid in a while. I could talk to him about this book too.”

“Yeah, I haven’t either. He’s a cool guy, and we shared a lot of good times together back when we were in high school. And maybe with your new outlook which you have just shared with me, we can really enjoy our time together with him and reconnect.”

“Yeah, definitely. Good idea. Just let me text Matt first.”

Ryan took over for the smoke. *“We’ll get to Joshua Tree eventually. Let’s just enjoy the moment and go see Carey. What happens, happens. Let the flow control.”* He took a drag to mask his wrinkled smirk.

“Well, Okay. But Matt’s bringing girls, and he showed me some pictures. Dude, you got to see this one girl, the one I was talking about before, Stacy”

“I doubt she’ll be there on time and only for one drink. Play it cool Dave. Let the moment control.”

“Okay, okay. But wait, we have to call Carey anyway. He might not even...”

“I texted him already. He said he’s ready for us whenever we are. Let’s go. Let the moment control.”

And at that moment, the perfect moment, the only moment of all the moments that mattered for anything, the one defining snippet of time that should have been savored and praised for all that it represented, all

the happiness and joy that the blood-suckers and guardian angels alike strive and die for on the regular, desperate desolate insecure maggots swimming around like guppy little yuppies looking to hang on the hooks of shit stories and bracelets and easy 7-step books brought to you by the mantra making machines turning and churning their fake plastic hopes and packaging them for you, the 28 year-old frat boy of a man, in that very all-defining and all-important moment when self-realization could have saved you and turned you away from the darkness of distraction, in that one moment where you could have changed your fate by reconstructing your outlook and redirecting your tiny but fairly significant course of history, changing the very meaning and purpose of your hitherto aimless and ambition-less existence and turning yourself into something worth talking about, something worth modeling future generations and entire societies after, in a word a man worth knowing and speaking of in only the most high-minded and respectful sense, instead of embracing this moment and becoming something good and decent you decided that it was absolutely, indisputably, and undeniably imperative, of the utmost importance at that incredibly crucial and life-defining moment in time, to look away from your friend, open your phone, and ask Matt if Stacy was at the bar, and if so whether she had been talking about you or not.