

December 3, 2003

To the White House,

As lay in bed this Saturday afternoon; my muscles felt empty from the morning run. At 5:30 I turned the last page in Jim Harrison's *Dalva* and felt the combination of joy and disappointment that comes with finishing a good book; moments later my eyelids became heavy and I let myself fall asleep as the sun went down. For me the transition to sleep is a little different; my ears turn off three to five seconds before I loose conscious thought. I've grown to love these silent moments and they're often filled with a simple thought or reflection. This afternoon I considered the probably that I'd wake up around 4:00 a.m.; I knew I wouldn't want to go back to sleep. I don't really like sleeping for long periods of time; it usually leaves me feeling sluggish for days. Waking at 4:00 a.m. would be nice, I would spend the early Sunday morning hours alone, sipping tea, writing, and waiting for the sun come up....

In the quiet darkness my eyes opened, consciousness returned, and my ears turned on... yes, my temporary deafness is present at both entry and exit from the sea of dreams... I felt pleased with my decision to go to bed so early and I moved my body into different sleeping positions every five minutes or so, noting how each position made my four major limbs feel. Waking up in this way is rare for me. Lately I've been too pressed for time to lay silent and stare into the darkness, or I've been overpowered by my excitement to learn, write, read, and create. I jump out of bed to do, and sacrifice the time to just be...

I always made time to wake up slowly with Malea though. Sometimes our bodies would already be intertwined... her head upon my chest; other times I would reach out to feel her skin... She has such smooth skin and I loved to watch her sleep... for four years it was one of my favorite things to do... Especially on the coldest nights we spent together at the plywood shack I lived in at 213 C St. in Davis. There our bodies seemed drawn together like powerful magnates... but more graceful, like mating snakes without the uneasy feeling that might accompany that image. We were in love... When I met up with her in Europe last summer something was different, the sounds she made were no longer endearing and the magnates had lost their charge... a few nights were even spent in separate beds... I later found out that my body was trying to tell me something, as Malea revealed two months later that she had broken our trust in Europe when she was traveling with her friend Jessica through Switzerland and I was still working in California.

I'm sorry to say that I haven't given each sleep experience more thought... and it's something I'm trying to change. A few days ago I paid a visit to the orchard I've planted at my parent's house. The hillside there is dotted with apple, pear, peach, cherry, apricot, plum, avocado, mandarin, and almond trees. I don't know why I'd never slept in the orchard but Thursday night I did; before closing my eyes I looked through the silhouetted web of branches and noticed their slow movements in the gentle wind, I listened to the sounds of far off voices, and animals, and I smiled. There were a couple of times during the night that it started to rain; not drizzle, but really rain, and I just laughed; joy bubbled up from a very deep place inside me as my face was pointalized by the cool drops of water, I didn't once think of going inside though the house was only 80 meters away. I was out there for an experience; and if that held spending the entire night awake and cold getting pelted with rain, I was up for it... in some way I wanted it... but each burst of rain lasted only five or ten minutes and I slept like a baby... a baby deer in the orchard....

This summer I figure I'll be sleeping in variety of places and I plan to write about each one in my journal... You see, my good friend Jefferson Pitcher and I are pedaling our bicycles from Northern California to the coast of Maine. Along the way we're going to fill our days with experience. We'll glide through the strange and alluring beauty of Southern Utah, deliver multiple singing telegrams (to help fund the trip), eat an entire Vermonster (22 scoops of ice cream) at the original Ben & Jerry's in Vermont, distribute granola bars to the homeless and hungry, and have dinner with Tom (from Tom's of Maine) in Maine... and if not *the* Tom of Maine... at least a Tom in Maine that would like to have us over for dinner.

We'll also swim naked in the Mississippi, sing the national anthem at a Yankees game (we're still working on this one), and rendezvous with the U.S. Forest Service at three different points to plant trees; it seems a fitting thing to do when crossing the continent on a bicycle, to give something back to the land...

We'd also really like to sleep in the Lincoln bedroom. Does it have two beds? If not, I'm totally open to sleeping on the floor or in another guest room that may not have any particular name. Jeff and I will have been on the road for a good six weeks and I'm sure we'll have slept in some pretty outlandish places; the White House would really top it all off. We couldn't pay for our stay as we're on a pretty tight budget but I'd be glad to cook dinner for the staff over there. My specialty is the veggie burrito though I have had some good early results from my experiments with the fig pizza...

Our departure date is June 1st and we should be in Washington D.C., on or around August 25th. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Michael Schwartz
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