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1/18/2023

English 300W

Professor Rice-Weber

Creative Nonfiction

This is my attempt at creative nonfiction. This essay recounts the events and conversations of a 15-mile walk with a close friend. We started on a random Monday when neither of us had to work so this was the day to do it. It was roughly 4:30 when we set out. From the looks of the environment, it could have easily been a blue hour. The trees had a particular look about them. Their long branches almost towered over us as we walked along the winding trail. Seeing as it was stick season the trees were bare, they lacked color and the sky seemed almost dead with its lack of any signs of life. Although, this could have been its level of beauty. As time slowly crept on, the shadows seemed to gain bravery as they slowly crept out of the thickly wooded areas that surrounded the path. As we crossed an open field the light level seemed to reflect a dark academic setting. This very rare occurrence is where I most feel at home. The darker tones always bring about the warmest conversation between friends. This was certainly the case for this walk. We reminisced about our history as friends and joked around a great deal. We had met as freshmen in high school, from different schools but on the same track team.

As the night got later and later the adventure strayed further and further from the original idea of taking a short walk. We found ourselves on a powerline trail marching along the undulating hills. The unforgiving terrain led to some comical moments of slipping and falling. However, not even that could break the enjoyment that the two of us were having on what was turning out to be quite the quest. As we traveled deeper and deeper the darkness soon completely consumed us. The light from the moon illuminated our path and we soon found a road that could lead us out. We bit the bullet and meandered our way down the

old dirt road. The dirt road was wet and muddy. Not muddy enough to sink in, but it was loose enough to leave behind tracks or traces of our adventure. As we walked we were met by hoof markings in the road. We immediately got on the conversation topic of riding horses and all of the wonderful things that we might be able to do. The conversation however was short-lived given that there are only a handful of things that one can do with horses. As we trekked onwards we came across a single house overlooking a field. The house sat perfectly in the back of the meadow. The lights on the inside were lit up and it glowed a golden color. You could vaguely see the silhouettes of people on the inside. There was the most beautiful music coming from the house as well. Even in the cold, unforgiving temperature, the scene was so pure it warmed my heart looking in. Although it did feel a bit wrong snooping around it was for an innocent reason. As we followed down the winding road we found ourselves at an intersection. By this point,, it was completely dark and we could barely see each other. I looked up expecting to see the bright moon igniting the night sky but I saw a slow moving solo cloud blocking the moon's beautiful rays. As we walked down the road in complete darkness we slowly agreed that the woods would be a much better view so we hopped right back into the woods. We were immediately absorbed by the darkness, the tall trees like fingers reaching up to the black night sky. We needed the general route of where we had come from and decided to choose that same direction to try and get home. Admittedly there were probably several other easier or more effective routes. However, with the limited amount of mapping or general knowledge of where we were this seemed like the least punishable way to go about it.

As we were walking back through the woods the cloud that had hid the moon earlier had finally moved from its original place and allowed the forest to be once again lit up by the moon. It seemed as if the cloud had moved down towards us as the forest was filled with this beautiful fog that made for a rather eerie night walk back. It was like we were walking through an ancient cemetery or some other burial ground as the trees looked like headstones and the fog looked as if the spirits of the people that once were alive were crawling out of the ground to bask in the moonlight. As we kept our hopes up that we were going in the right direction and marched confidently through the heavily wooded area we couldn't help but use the fog to our advantage and tell each other scary stories. Not just any kind of scary stories. Stories scary enough that when you hear a tree branch crack or a stick break or a squirrel drop a singular acorn from its nest, it makes you jump straight up in the air to your partner's delight. As the adventure rolled on however the laughs seemed to fade few and far between and the both of us seemed to be hit with the reality that we had been hiking for a while, and neither one of us could clearly see an end to the excursion. We started joking about getting pulled out of the forest by helicopter. Just when we thought we had lost all hope of getting our way back home that night, my friend Paul had pointed out that on the crest of a hill, there

seemed to be a berm for a bike path. As we got closer to it, the hypothesis held that this was indeed a bike ridge. We knew that if we were to follow the bike berm that it would lead us straight back into familiar territory. Though we both knew that this still meant that we were still quite far away from home. We wandered down the winding path, taking our time and keeping the anxiety at bay. The trees formed almost a fence around the path itself, sort of guiding us home in a way. We attempted to use our flashlights to avoid the roots that were haphazardly spouting along the path but the fog made it somewhat difficult for the flashlight to even be effective. Then just when we hit the two hour mark the light from my house finally came into our vision we were home.