

it has been almost a year since i sent off the zine. over the next few weeks portions of the text will be released for those who missed it...



change is not to be found at the summit but is instead a result of the climb.

most people are not strong enough to hurt themselves. at least not at first. i don't mean that they physically lack strength to cause injury, i mean that in the gym or any environment that they can exercise control, they will quit mentally long before they encounter any real physical danger. "hard" work is a constant negotiation, your body sends you signals, information about the cost of your actions and you have to convince yourself to keep carving away at that pound of flesh despite the consequences. in that situation, most people drop the knife at the first sight of blood - but as we train, as we learn to get comfortable with the pain, to manage those costs, we creep, inch by inch, into the deep end and one day we reach our toes down only to realize we cant reach bottom, we are in over our head.

this exhibits in a few ways - cramping, vomiting, blinding headaches, symptoms like food poisoning, burst blood vessels in the eyes and face. symptoms usually last from a couple days to a week - working out during this window is usually nearly impossible and certainly ill advised, but something happens during this forced downtime, something transforms. there is a realization; that every time you "went hard" before this you held back. you left something in the tank. as hard as you may have gone before you had never felt like this. it usually happens by accident, a change in circumstance or scenery - an adjustment or challenge momentarily shifts your self image and you fall victim to L'appel du vide, you gave in to the call of the void and this time nothing stopped you, no one protected you - and now the world looks different. shifted. it is like your first true heartbreak - it can't really be "sought out" and no one wants to wish it on someone else, but there is usefulness to be found in the darkness. the bone-deep realization that the world is a little less safe, that risk and consequences are visceral things, they have a taste and a sound and a cost that must be paid. more than that, there is now an understanding that you possess the ability to do real damage. you have earned a bit more responsibility and the freedom to do with it what you will. the safety is off and the gun is loaded, now it is up to you to hit your target and avoid shooting yourself in the process.

i don't mean to romanticize this. anyone who has felt it or even witnessed the effects will tell you that it is far from flattering - but that does not mean it isn't useful. it is a shift in perception. a changing of the rules. after someone goes through that fire it is now up to them to hold the reigns - because we do not get better by doing this - it is a tool with an extremely high cost, and one that does not get cheaper with frequent use. it is physically damaging and even from the most meat headed perspective, it benches you from meaningful training for at least a couple days. but after something like this we realize that we are responsible for these costs - and we can exercise judgement of when it is worth it. we are more capable of making that decision, of exerting our will.

most of the time in the gym we chase numbers as reflections of our ability, moments like this are shifts in perception. they are lessons that once felt will never be forgotten.

this was written years ago, in what feels like a different world, and while the struggle i was speaking of might feel a little trivial at this time, it does not feel irrelevant. rites of passage have always intrigued me - a socially agreed upon line where childhood ends and adulthood begins.

often forced. often unpleasant. it is an accounting of sorts. an excising of the assumptions of childhood.

isolation is, ironically enough, a key piece in many of these rituals. to strip away the attention of the community, to make one live for a time without its constant presence - and to ask them to return only when they have something to bring back.

isolation is a beautiful teacher. our environment exerts such an overwhelming pressure on us that without it we become unmoored, we drift and spin and obsess over the past and the future and anything but where we are right now. but then it breaks. the self is all that is left. regardless of what created it, it is the only thing available to explore. so we do. we try and understand our place in all of this. more than that, in learning that we can be cut out, cut away - in learning how much we actually take from our surroundings without thought - we have to learn how to justify our expense.

purpose. purpose is what separates a rite of passage from a crisis. from a penalty.

purpose, above all, is a choice. it is an attitude. it is a way to view a set of circumstances.

so we find purpose. we create purpose.

CONT... soon...