

The Star Thrower from The Unexpected Universe, by Loren Eiseley
PART I

I have caught a glimpse of what man may be, along an endless wave-beaten coast at dawn. It began on the beaches of Costabel. I was an inhumanly stripped skeleton without voice, without hope, wandering alone upon the shores of the world. I was devoid of pity, because pity implies hope. In a dingy restaurant I had heard a woman say, "In Costabel, my father reads a goose bone for the weather." Perhaps that was why I had finally found myself in Costabel, why all men are destined at some time to arrive there as I did.

I concealed myself beneath a fisherman's cap and sunglasses, so that I looked like everyone else on the beaches of Costabel, which are littered with the debris of life. There, along the strip of wet sand that marks the tide, death walks hugely and in many forms. The sea casts them repeatedly back upon the shore. The tiny breathing pores of starfish are stuffed with sand. The rising sun shrivels their unprotected bodies. The endless war is soundless. Nothing screams but the gulls. In the night, torches bobbing like fireflies along the beach, are the sign of the professional shellers. Greedy madness sweeps over the competing collectors, hurrying along with bundles of gathered starfish that will be slowly cooked and dissolved in the outdoor kettles provided by the resort hotels for the cleaning of specimens. It was there that I met the star thrower.

As the sound of the sea became heavier and more menacing, I rounded a bluff into the full blast of the offshore wind. Long-limbed starfish were strewn everywhere, sprawling where the waves had tossed them as though showered down through the night sky. The sun behind me was pressing upward at the horizon's rim ~ an ominous red glare amidst the tumbling blackness of the clouds. Ahead of me, over the projecting point, a gigantic rainbow of incredible perfection had sprung shimmering into existence. Toward its foot I discerned a human figure standing, as it seemed to me, within the rainbow. He was gazing fixedly at something in the sand.

He stooped and flung an object beyond the breaking surf. I labored another half a mile toward him and by the time I reached him, kneeling again, the rainbow had receded ahead of us. In a pool of sand and silt a starfish had thrust its arms up stiffly and was holding its body away from the stifling mud. "It's still alive," I ventured. "Yes," he said, and with a quick, yet gentle movement, he picked up the star and spun it over my head and far out into the sea. "It may live if the offshore pull is strong enough," he said.

In a sudden embarrassment for words I said, "Do you collect shells?" "Only ones like this," he said softly, gesturing amidst the wreckage of the shore, "and only for the living." He stooped again, and skipped another star neatly across the water. "The stars," he said, "throw well. One can help them." He looked full at me with a faint question kindling in his eyes. "No, I do not collect," I said uncomfortably, the wind beating at my garments. "neither the living nor the dead. I gave it up a long time ago. Death is the only successful collector." I nodded and walked away, leaving him there with the great rainbow ranging up the sky behind him.

I turned as I neared a bend in the coast and saw him toss another star, skimming it skillfully far out over the ravaging and tumultuous water. For a moment, in the changing light, the Sower appeared magnified, with the posture of a god. But, my cold world-shriveling view began its inevitable circling in my skull. He is just a man, I considered sharply, bringing my thought to rest. The star thrower is a man, and death is running more fleet than he, and along every seabeach in the world.

.....
TO EACH ONE, EACH DAY, LIFE TO ITS FULLEST ~ *Papu & Ani Ani's Credo*

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly – what is essential is invisible to the eye...

On ne voit bien qu'avec le coeur – l'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux...

The Little Prince ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Be Yourself – Strive to Be Happy ~ *Desiderata*

The Star Thrower from The Unexpected Universe, by Loren Eiseley
PART II

I adjusted the dark lens of my glasses and, thus disguised, I paced slowly past the starfish gatherers, past the shell collectors, with their vulgar little spades while they snatched at treasures in the sand. I chose to look full at the steaming kettles in which beautiful voiceless things were being boiled alive. Arriving in the darkness of my room, I lay quiet with sunglasses removed.

There is an analogue for the mind of man and the known universe, the analogue between the conflicts of man-imposed mathematical order and of eternal chaos, the instability that lies at the heart of the world, where each species and each individual holds tenaciously to its present nature, where the present momentarily persists and the future is potential only.

As a boy growing up in the great plains, a usually predictable landscape, I came to realize that the trickster cyclone which descends out of nowhere like a maleficent primordial mind, illuminates a hidden dualism that has haunted man since antiquity, the conflict between good and evil, chaos versus antichaos, torn between the original Biblical darkness and the dancing light of our wistful present-day human form. Between the admonition of Jesus – “tarry thou, till I come again” – and the deep-hidden human psyche which begs for longevity beyond the body, I yearned for the lesson of transcendence that is prepared in the mind itself. Backward we gaze through evolution, into the contracting cone of life, until words leave us and all we know is the simple reptilian brain, where sentience subsides into the simple-celled animalcule. We have played such roles infinitely longer than we have been men. Identity is a dream. We are a process, not reality, for reality is an illusion of our day.

The evolutionists saw life rushing outward from an unknown center, just as today the astronomer senses the galaxies fleeing into the infinity of darkness. From the Darwinian thesis we moved to Freud’s inner world where the mind is revealed as a place of contending furies. For this reason I had come to Costabel. And now I lay on my agonized bed. “Love not the world,” the Biblical injunction runs. “But I do love the world,” I whispered to the empty room. I love its small ones, the things beaten in the strangling surf the singing bird which falls and is not seen again, the lost ones, the failures of the world.” Thus was the renunciation of my scientific heritage.

I had seen the star thrower cross that rift and he had reasserted the human right to define his own frontier. He had moved to the utmost edge of natural being. I had been unbelieving, hardened by the indifference of maturity. I arose with a solitary mission, to find the star thrower beneath his rainbow. I found him on a projecting point of land in the sweet rain-swept morning. Silently, I sought and picked up a still-living star, spinning it far out into the wave. I spoke once briefly. “I understand,” I said, “call me another thrower.” Only then I allowed myself to think. He is not alone any longer. After us there will be others. We were part of the rainbow – like the drawing of a circle in men’s minds, the circle of perfection.

I picked and flung another star. I could feel the movement in my body. It was like a sowing – the sowing of life on an infinitely gigantic scale. I looked back over my shoulder, and small and dark against the receding rainbow, the star thrower stooped and flung one more. I never looked back again. The task we assumed was too immense for gazing. I flung and flung again while all about us roared the insatiable waters of death, the burning sun, for it was men as well as starfish that we sought to save, a thrower who loved not man, but life.

This edited version of Eiseley’s Star Thrower is presented by Papu – email to hulashack@gmail.com

.....

TO EACH ONE, EACH DAY, LIFE TO ITS FULLEST ~ Papu & Ani Ani’s Credo

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly – what is essential is invisible to the eye...

On ne voit bien qu’avec le coeur – l’essentiel est invisible pour les yeux...

The Little Prince ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Be Yourself – Strive to Be Happy ~ Desiderata