

BEYOND THE VALLEY:

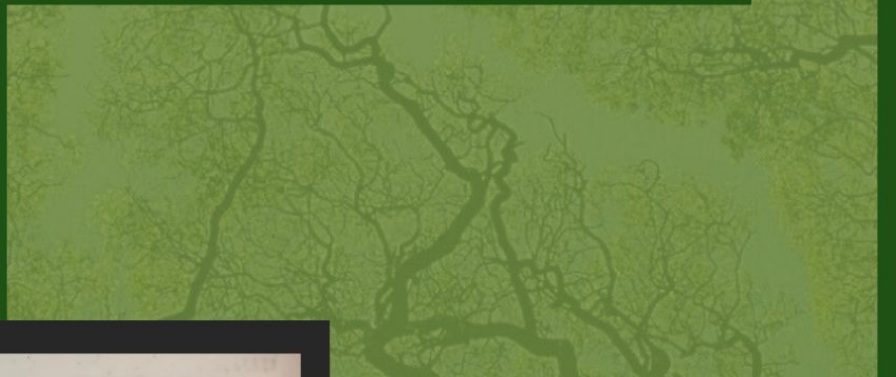
In 2009, I lived near Lombard Street and there's a hill there that I would climb up and it's a pretty significant bomb. You get a lot of speed. I'm up there and I go maybe three feet and I hit a bump. I'd barely gone any distance and I fell and I hit my head hard, right down on my forehead. I feel my head and there's blood. So I bomb the hill, bleeding from my head because that's the way home. I go in and my roommate's there, he's on the phone, and I say I fell. He asked me are you okay? You don't look so good. I said I was fine, but I started to get dizzy. I went and sat down on my bed and the light started to get bright, like over bright and sort of twinkling stars and all this stuff. I started to drift out a little bit and there was a voice in my head that I'm pretty sure was me that said, I think I'm dying. There was another voice in my head that said, okay, but let's not try to make that happen. That other voice said, why do you want to live? I said, people. Then, all the people in my life flashed in front of my eyes, and I said, no, they'll be fine. Then I said, art and everything that I had done and would do kind of flashed in these quick slideshow images. I said, no, that doesn't really matter. Then I see a tree with like the light shining on the leaves and the leaves are quaking in the wind and they're sort of shimmering gold. No words, just the image of the tree. I said, that's it. That's why.

I kind of come back to and I get up and I start to walk down the hall and the entire hall is spinning. I'm nowhere in control of my balance or body. I see my roommate and he says, I think you need to sit down. I turned around and that other voice came back and said, don't fall down the stairs. I was right next to the stairs, so I pushed off of the banister and I went down in the hall and then everything went black. There was a moment when I felt like I was surrounded by people. There was light behind them. I could just see silhouettes, but there were a lot of them. They were doing something to me. They were like downloading, or pulsing something to me. I don't know what it was. It wasn't images or anything like that. It felt like I was being uploaded with something. I felt like I was covered in water. There was a layer of water all over my skin and I was shaking in it. Then I looked up and I saw my roommate's face light up and then the background light up and then everything lit up like a three-way light bulb like click, click, click. At this point, he's freaking out. I knew I had to get to the shower. So I crawled, literally on my hands and knees, crawled to the shower, turned on the water, the cold water hit my head and I came to. I think that that was probably the first time I was fully back since when I sat down and had the whole tree image and all that stuff. I didn't have insurance at the time, so I couldn't go to the hospital. But I'm sure I had a bad concussion.

After all that happened, I'm sort of left just interpreting it. The people that were surrounding me very much felt like what people would call guides or ancestors or whatever. Like a spirit committee, whatever you want to call it. I just sort of moved on with my life and I stopped chasing death after that point. It got to the point where I felt like I caught up, I caught it.

I felt her presence. I've had things happen to me that don't make sense. People can disagree with me or not believe me as much as they want. It doesn't make sense to me in any other way than to think that she's around somehow. She's doing something, pulling strings, making shit happen, making people come into my life. I don't know, but I could feel her presence. And there are times when it feels like she's there. I still have the urge to call her to this day. I think about it all the time, how much I would just like to talk to her about things. She was not the best advice giver. She told me I should be on fucking survivor. Like, as a life plan! It's not like I miss her sage advice. I just miss her...thing. I miss her presence in my life.

Years later, it had to be like 2012, I had moved in with Natalie. We were starting to live together and we were just having laundry day. I gave her a hug, and I looked behind her, and there was a tree that looked just like the tree in my vision. I felt like this was the time. This was the next part that I needed to live for at that moment. At the time, when it first happened, I thought, it's the small moments, live for the small moments. But I think it was very much about this time. And now we have two kids. And there's this whole life that before now, I didn't think was ever going to happen. I had, like, pretty much given up completely.



I'm skateboarding around the city and I'm taking a lot of risks. I'm weaving in and out of traffic. All my anger and all of my normal, grief feelings were manifested into these big risks that I was taking. I buy a truck, a tent, and a surfboard, and I'm a terrible swimmer. I sink like a rock. I start paddling out into crazy shit. They must have thought I was a hardcore surfer and I was just not. I just wasn't good. I would be underwater as much as I was on waves and it was about just going head first into big waves and being held underwater and coming out okay.

With skating, I was bombing hills. It wasn't all bad and self-destructive, but I was definitely chasing death.

It would get to a point where I would have these moments of serenity in it. I remember a time being right next to a tractor trailer and the wheels are right here, spinning. We had to be doing 30 down the hill and I just reached out my hand and I touched the trailer. It just felt so serene. I felt like I was not just invincible but that I was like making the universe happen. It was amazing.

Then there were times when it just wasn't healthy and it kind of kept up for a couple of years to the point where all that stuff became like drinking a cup of coffee. I would drink a cup of coffee. I would eat a snack. I'd go bomb a hill. I'd go paddle out in a 10 foot surf.

Here's another thing that I've learned. These people that we lose, they don't go away. They might be physically absent and absent on Earth, but they're inside of us. That relationship that you have, you still have to deal with it.

The thing about death is, and a lot of religions talk about this in a lot of different ways to make people understand it, it is and it isn't final. We live on in the people that we influence, and the people who we've lost live on in us. Outside of any sort of spiritual belief, they're still alive, they're still active, their ripples are still happening



When mom died, it was big. I say it's like, she was the sun and she just blipped out of existence. So all the planets went off. There was no gravity holding us anymore, you know?