

Spark #1.11 - Attention To Detail

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I've been told that I'm good at paying attention to details. Frankly, I don't believe it for a minute. But I do try to look at things with some attention. I don't know if that's attention to detail, because so many things get past me- my life is like a flood of information- a great high speed train wreck of water, mud, broken houses, all manner of human detritus, flotsam, jetsam, and broken bits of things. It's everywhere, and it fills my mind. I find it exhausting, and learned many years ago to tune most of the universe out for the sake of some small feeble grip on sanity.

Sometimes I don't like going out- too much invasive noise, too much commercial crap trying to impel its way into my mind. When I do, I usually don't look too much around me. A long time ago I figured out there's really no point to it, so I prefer to look up or down, but not around so much- enough to navigate the crowds for obvious safety reasons- but usually I'm more impressed with what is above and below.

Above - the beautiful sky - often blue, sometimes grey with fog, sometimes white with clouds. I can see birds fly above- sometimes a flock of wild budgies will screech overhead. Usually it's just the average citizens of the air — the pigeons, jays, finches, hawks, starlings, and jet aircraft. Near my house, there are woods, and even though I live in the middle of San Francisco, sometimes I see hawks lazily hanging on the updrafts from the Pacific Ocean, and sometimes gulls wearily describing odd arcs in the air with their endless search for fresh food or garbage.

And above the birds, the aircraft tearing across the sky as they lift up from the Airport, engines wide on, howling, shrieking and groaning into the clouds to bring people home or take them away from home. Sometimes the direct flights to the Orient draw temporary white scars across the blue. And above the blue, more clouds and the sun sets gently into the Pacific in a dazzling orange murk of backlit fog and early evening mist, which quietly settle into the grey gloaming and the night's cloudy curtains.

The fog will often break in the night, and expose the "night- her sable dome scattered with diamonds" - tiny pinpoints of light that are actually giant hydrogen fusion explosions trillions of miles away- each one a sun similar to our own. Some larger, some smaller, all of them an impressive display — each a tiny grain of sand in the great beach of our galaxy, each a vast roiling star. If I go out into the darkest country on a moonless night, I can look to Andromeda and just vaguely see a fuzzy patch not much bigger than the missing moon, and that fuzzy patch is another shoreline of starry sands, another island galaxy silently hurtling and swirling through the velvet empire of space. Scientists call it M31, but it is better known as the Andromeda Galaxy. Borrowing a telescope helps- it looks more like an oblong fuzzy patch, with a brighter center. It is hundreds of billions of suns like our own.

Beyond Andromeda? More of the same- and like Andromeda, we're alone on a beach, abandoned, mortal, and singing the songs our parents taught us to keep the wolves away.

And beneath Andromeda? My feet, my street, my world. Each detail in the street is like another star in the sky- every rounded nub of pavement a mountain surrounded by valleys filled with plants and creatures living lives I can't comprehend. Each square of the sidewalk forms a composition, a shape of forms and elements the mind connects together. A blot of hardened chewing gum here, next to a crack that runs like a canyon across the upper left corner, and to the lower right- a large vaguely rectangular blob left ten years ago from motor oil, dirt, and smoke. Each square of the pavement its own composition, its own world, its own universe with its own internal relations and geometry.

Occasionally I find a coin, or a page torn from a book; perhaps a page of poetry, a timetable or bus schedule, a shopping list or a receipt, a scrap of newspaper - all abandoned, all filled with stories I'll never know.

Next to the sidewalk are flowers, grasses, and the street. Broken bits of junk, an old cassette with the label worn off, a filthy old sock, glass shards, newspaper.

Above me- the beauty of the universe, below, the world I live in. But around me?

Nothing but advertising.