

The Wild Open Space of Death

Anonymous, M.D.



Anonymous, M.D.

The winter of 1985 was the worst. Not because of the cold or snow, of which we had had plenty. No, it was because my wife had left, taking the children, the dog, the cat, all their stuff, even the piano. No warning, no note, nothing. Just gone. My stuff was mostly still there and unharmed, so at least there wasn't spite in the move. But I was left in sudden cold loneliness of no family. My friends in that small mountain town must have known, even perhaps helped with the move. What did they think of me? I was really in the cold with no one to talk to.

I continued on in my small country practice of medicine, trying to keep myself together. I began seeing a very helpful family psychologist who helped me sort it all out, at least on the surface, but she was no help deep down where the knots were. I was definitely slipping into depression. I had a gun, and thought of its sudden bloody conclusion to this misery. Or an overdose. As a doctor, I could get a lethal dose of something painless. No blood involved. That's how bad I had sunk.

A few weeks later, I assembled some friends to "spot" for me. For privacy we went way up on the mountain, where I laid down on a pad on the ground and injected 100 mg of the sterile solution into my gluteus maximus. It hurt like crazy! Ketamine is a tissue irritant, and I felt every milligram. Slowly the pain began to subside and I relaxed into a reddish-brown haze. The haze became a sandstorm from which emerged the strangest creature. It was smaller than I by half, and it insisted that I get up and walk about this new place. The creature showed me cliffs and rocks, all of sandy red. I sensed that I was being shown the terrain of Mars by an inhabitant of that planet. I began to hear water. Rain. The red dust gradually turned to bright blue and I found myself under a blue tarp in a thunderstorm downpour. My friends had erected a tarp shelter for me when they saw the storm approaching. I had been "away" 45 minutes.

I was definitely slipping into depression. I had a gun, and thought of its sudden bloody conclusion to this misery.

We waited a while for the rain to stop, then I tried to walk but found myself very unsteady - ataxic is the medical term. Somehow I wobbled back down the trail. It had been an unpleasant experience overall and I had no inclination to do it again.

In the bleak days after my wife left, however, I found myself drawn to ketamine more and more. I began using a 100 or 150 mg dose perhaps once a week. I learned to dry it out to create a powder. The power would cause intense nasal pain, but I knew it would be short lived as the drug took effect and I settled in to a very different yet comforting world – the world of my inner symbolic mind.

On many occasions I would find myself on a high, dark promontory overlooking a vast space. The sky was filled with unrecognizable dim stars. It was never cold or windy, just pleasant as I lay there looking out over the scene. Sometimes I heard birds, even the lonesome cry of loons, though they didn't live in those lakeless mountains. I began answering those calls with a strange cry that came from deep in my throat, rather like a cat cry but with an additional guttural sound that even today sends chills down my spine and alarms others who hear it. I called it crying as it reminded me of crowing and crying mixed together. As the months went by, I would find myself not on a promontory anymore. I was just out there in dark space amid those dim, somehow comforting stars. It was at this point that I awoke and realized that I knew what it was like to be dead, to go back to the ether that surrounds and permeates everything. More importantly, I realized that I didn't want to die – not yet. I had been there and seen that, and I was not afraid of it. Death would come someday and, though it may be painful to make the passage, death itself would be peaceful, comforting and even pleasant.

I continued seeing my counselor, who was becoming more helpful at repairing my damaged inner self. Or was it the ketamine? With everything going on at once, it was hard to tell. Ketamine provided the real breakthrough, though. Tripping had become almost routine by this point, and I was not expecting much change when I “awoke” on one trip in a tight, dark box. This was a new sensation, and it was very uncomfortable. I realized I was in a coffin and I began to panic, but found myself helpless. Just then the top of the box began to open slowly, letting in a bright white light. I

realized I was completely naked. The top was now completely open, and I blinked in the extreme brightness to see a beautiful woman in a flowing white gown. She took me by the hand and helped me stand up. I could not see them in the bright omnipresent light, but I realized that we were surrounded by a large group of people dressed in formal evening clothes. The murmurs coming from the group were of overwhelming approval. Even in my nakedness, I stood humbly as if accepting some award. It was the award of love for life, and after that trip I was definitely a happier, more confident person.

That beautiful experience never happened again, though I tried ketamine many times more. I began getting trips where war and helicopters would be a feature. Sometimes I would awaken to find myself huddled in a cold corner of the bedroom. How did I get there? Then the trips became nothing but a black visionless sleep. I realized that I had reached the maximum experience that ketamine could give me, and now it was time to move on. I quit taking it without regret or craving, put my life together, moved away from the mountains, and changed my medical career into something more rewarding for me. The job change also increased my income so I could care for my children better and give them a good education. I have since re-married and live a stable and satisfying life. **And to this day, I am not afraid of death. •**

It was
the award of
love for life,
and after that trip
I was definitely
a happier,
more confident
person.