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The Ultimate Madness of Old King Lear

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DAVID SPARENBERG is a Jewish mystic and poet who is author of numerous poems, articles and short stories.

There was an old man and he went out alone. He climbed up a hill and he sat down and he looked all around.

The old man did not like what he saw. On every side, the land was clearcut. In the valley, smoke and grime ascended from the ever increasing human community.

The old man went down the hill and back to the city. Here he took all of his gentleman's clothes and ripped them into rags and made himself a suit and coat of shreds and patches.

Then again, a day came and the man went out alone. He climbed a second hill and sat down. He listened all around. For a moment the elder thought that he heard the voices of starving young birds. Behind that sounded a chorus of wild creature, plaintively crying. But it was really his own blood and heartbeat filled with grief. For the clearcut land was motionless and silent, with a silence as forlorn as the will of extinction.

The old man went down the hill and back to the city once more. Here he took all of his civilized tools and broke and smashed them, and threw them, in their wreckage together. Then he took the slippery fluids on which they ran and rubbed them into his hair, and rubbed hard into the wrinkles of his old and spotted hands.

After awhile a third day came when the weird old man went walking alone. Up another hill he climbed. And there he sat in the heat of the sun, feeling the feel of the naked land all around.

A long time the elder meditated, wearing his rags, with his head and hands smeared with oily reminders of heedless human plunder. Finally, the feeling of the land came to him. And the old man realized that it was the feeling of fear of humankind overtaking the Earth. So he shuddered, shedding bitter tears that leaked down through the etchings of his hollow cheeks.

Sorrowing heavily, the old man descended and returned to the city. Here he took all of the pretty things that had made his life a selfish comfort, piled them high and, with the house that had been a roof over his greying head, fed the trinkets, the gadgets, and the memories to consuming fire.

Then, the elder stained his face and chest with soot and hot ashes. And he ran away: far, far away, into the desolation beyond the ever increasing human community.

From time to time, and from year to year, the old one wasted, until there was

no more left of him than his bones. And beyond, nothing but the spectre of his degraded image, haunting, to this day, the slopes of the hills of a once great and majestic forest. A mad ghost, like a gadfly, buzzing, buzzing over the ravaged, carbuncular skin of the clearcut land. Dying its death, over and over again.

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