

Sunset over Wilderness State Park

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I went to the beach of Lake Michigan, left my shoes and socks and even my cigar by an unused lifeboat, and walked, easy all the way. God and I spoke—me in thought, and He in the story of the changing colors of the clouds. Wind fanned down from the Upper Peninsula and reached me like a letter, gusts addressed to me, whole billows sealed with loving lips from the people of the North.

The Sun fell one notch and shot out colors to be carefully mixed and dispensed to every lofty palette. One notch more and I caught a minute revelation of the heavens torn apart. I looked upside down and saw the Badlands in pink and orange pastels, then right side up to engage every dying moment of the ethereal panorama unfolding above me.

One cloud came low, a tongue of fire dipped, searing into the pan of the sea. In their meeting came new elements and one new thought, but only for a blink. Then, the orange hoverer descended to blanket me in wispy robes. From it I grew wet and then turned to ice when the lake blew, but it was all to clarify my senses, both corporeal and spiritual, and I finished the sunset. The Artist beckoned me, trembling, to place the final stroke. The Author of life, who by wisdom ordained the precise measurement of the Earth and the whimsical character of clouds, guided my finger and drew it out and up to the horizon.

Suddenly magnified, my finger, now a brush, pushed a long swath of cumulus into a crimson puff of mist from which exploded a mellow purple as tribute, though removed from true glory, to the amaranthine jewels at the throne of God. My Creator spoke, “With you I am well pleased,” and at his thundering, the sky began to drain and mix into a spiral galaxy. At its epicenter lay the Sun and dragged into it, as if to be washed away forever were the clouds and sea, even gulls and the life boat were swept into the cosmic wheel, spinning and shrinking, until at its very end there came a heavy sigh.

The colors were released for focused motion like the nature of a wave. It swept into me, searing flesh and hair and clothing, and when I opened my eyes, the sky was bare. Night had come in hallucinatory seconds and exchanged the kingdom of light for the kingdom of the wolf, howling at a tone perceptible only to those who are utterly lost in the joyful loss that only the sunset can tell.