



Peace Meal Supper Club #22: Nonesuch

Versailles ~ January 13, 2024

For the benefit of Palestine Children's Relief Fund

Course 1: Zero Gravity

Momos ~ Winter Greens Stir Fry

Course 2: Is There in Truth No Agency?

Root Vegetable Braise ~ Licorice Root and Juniper Reduction

Course 3: A World Where Many Worlds Fit

Tamales ~ Butternut Pot de Crème ~ Pipián Verde
Zapatista Coffee Syrup

Course 4: *...dreams deferred?*

Pecan Pie ~ Maple Glaze

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The beginning of a new year prompts many of us to take inventory of our personal space and make a few course corrections. A New Year rests upon an imaginary calendar—just as a nation might rest upon an imaginary identity. So why not expand the scope of our assessment and take the opportunity to renegotiate our reality?

Utopian thought, constructively subversive, is liberating and inspiring. In the words of American activist, feminist, and visionary Emma Goldman: “I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things.”

~ 1 ~

Shambhala lies unreachable in the mountainous ranges of Tibet—or in China, or in Nepal, depending on which European explorer you ask. Though eagerly sought, it has never been found. Considered a place of peace and happiness, ageless living, and universal enlightenment, it aligns with the Confucian idea of the Great Unity: a society ruled by the public who choose leaders of virtue and ability. Trust and harmony are paramount. People love not only their own parents and children, but also those of others. The elderly are allowed to be useful to society and receive care until death. Widows, orphans, and those with disabilities are supported. Everyone accepts their responsibilities. Selfish thoughts are non-existent, which in turn makes crime non-existent.

Eastern traditions contain no Fall, no severing of a relationship between humankind and their god. We simply got too busy and neglected our duties. We can return to Shambhala if we will just tidy up a bit and quit being so rowdy.

~ 2 ~

The Mediterranean Sea was ringed by utopian societies. From Greece's Golden Age to the biblical Eden, each of them suffered a Fall. Frequently, it can be traced to an outsider: someone who gifts humans with fire, or a clever serpent who introduces the Socratic Method to a woman in a garden. She engaged, as most of us would, in the act of learning—though it had been expressly forbidden. Being subsequently banished from Eden, she and her partner suffered disease, pain, an uncooperative earth, and ultimately death. Does that seem a heavy price to pay for exercising self-determination, claiming bodily autonomy, and wondering if one's choices are well-informed?

Renegotiating reality begins with determining which side of the Looking Glass you're on.

~ 3 ~

Imagine a people who, in one of their earliest insurgent acts, issued the Women's Revolutionary Law (there is a copy on the table). The Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, announced their sovereignty along with their values—work, land, housing, food, healthcare, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice, and peace—on January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA first went into force. They claimed their right to self-determination and established a society that is non-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, pro-education, and revolutionarily feminist. The Zapatista coffee cooperatives are key to their survival, for they provide funds for schools, hospitals, and infrastructure. While never formally laying down its weapons, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) has since become known more for its peaceful mobilizations, dialogue with civil society, and structures of political, economic, and cultural autonomy.

~ 4 ~

Utopian thought is the path that leads us into dignity, respect, and greater belonging. It seems to run parallel to Dr. Martin Luther King's arc of the moral universe. It is as hopeful as a dream.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.

“I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.”