



(a tale of authentic discovery)

by
N.E. Nordstrom

Ah, The Tick

(a tale of authentic discovery)

By
N.E. Nordstrom

<http://Imagine-Nation.biz>
Email: info@imagine-nation.biz
©2003/N.E. Nordstrom

An Insight

Who we believe ourselves to be is based on perception.

This internal awareness is influenced, however, by input from others. Assumed or otherwise, their judgment tends to carry more weight than our own acuity. We choose to add that weight to the deciding factors of who we are, rather than acknowledge it as simply a projection of their self-developed beliefs. With this input, we change our image to meet their interpretation of who we should be, forming a superficial, and somewhat deformed, truth about ourselves.

This newly created reality causes us to lose sight of what we *can* be and to be what is expected instead. With our truth lost in the transition fulfillment, contentment, and authenticity become elusive commodities that we dream of attaining yet feel are beyond our grasp, or right, to achieve.

Somewhere on this journey, we have failed to remember that reality is what we make it.

Our current reality, which we have adopted as our truth, influences our interaction with the world around us. We interact with the day and those that are a part of it based on this distorted self-image. In doing so, we do not discern that when we approach our world with negative expectations negative responses are returned. Nor do we recognize that when we approach with positive expectations, positive outcomes can be expected. Instead we continue to rely on the projected self-serving interest of others and respond in kind.

It is a matter of choice. We chose the reality we created with input from others, healthy and otherwise. However, we are choosing the reality we are developing now. Is it to be created through personal awareness or through projected judgments? Will

we create a reality that is one of happiness and contentment or one filled with strife and struggle? In making our choice we form the totality of our perceived truth of not just ourselves, but of the world around us, as well.

This shaped reality is a current experience. It is the here, the now, the moment we are living and letting pass by, for the “now” has already passed and a new has arrived. Each new now allows us to recreate our reality of choice. And so this cycle continues until our future becomes a memory of what we considered yesterday yet can no longer apply to today. A memory of a future lost.

Since the truth of our reality is what we choose it to be, would it not be wiser to identify a truth that is genuine to our nature? Should we not discover, and joyously be, our distinctive self, that part of each one of us that is untouched by external input?

It is time to set aside the projected perception of others who would have us create a reality of their choosing. It is time to find our own truth, and to live that truth completely. Only then will reality be the life we were meant to live.

The clock is ticking and each moment of our reality is waiting for us to create it. Let us choose to create a reality that is true to who we are, not by definition of distorted projections, but rather one that better suits our souls, one that allows us to be authentically ourselves: full of dreams and with the potential to live them. In turn we will live with a sense of peace and purpose for today, and anticipation for tomorrow.

The choice is ours. We can accept our truth based on previously poor observations, or accept it based on the perceptions we now know we can create. The choice to change from one to the other can occur in the most ridiculous of ways, shown to us by the most unexpected of teachers.

Choose to remain the same or choose to learn and grow. The moment is now. The clock is ticking.

Ah, the tick.

Chapter 1

Not all that long ago there lived a little guy named Thomas who, by the peculiarity of wind, found himself where he was the least desired: in the Land of Dog. Thomas was not a welcome visitor in this Land and was constantly scratched from the very property he tried to claim as his own, picked up and tossed aside like the tick he was.

Yes, Thomas was a tick: a small, black dog-tick with eight scrawny legs. Being a tick in the Land of Dog, although ideal for his diet, did little for his social life. This made it difficult for him to settle down in one place. In fact, in his entire existence, at least up to this point, Thomas had only been able to lay claim to one home, which he had inhabited for a very brief period of time. Since losing his beloved residence, Thomas had become a wanderer, looking for what he called the glories that were found in each day: the unexpected.

Thomas was a rather peculiar arachnid in that he was happy. Where most ticks railed against their lowly status and tended to suck the very life's blood from their surroundings, Thomas had decided, quite young, to accept who he was, what he was, and to make the most of where he was. There was no defining moment that was the epicenter of this decision. There were no lightening bolts, ah-ha revelations, or sudden epiphanies. Thomas, by his very

nature at birth, had realized that going with the wind and taking the best out of his day made him far happier than approaching life with the disgruntled pettiness of his fellow ticks. His lighthearted, nomadic existence allowed him to discover more about himself and the world around him than most arachnids ever did in their entire lifetimes.

This acceptance of who he was and approaching his life accordingly instilled a deep contentment within Thomas, but it made his fellow parasites uneasy.

“You should be more perturbed about losing your home,” they would insist in their most strident tones.

“Life is too miserable for you to be so happy,” they whined incessantly.

“Why do you think tomorrow will be any better than today?” they questioned with contempt.

Thomas would simply reply, “What was – was, I cannot change it. What is – is. I will make the best of it. What will be – well,” he’d continue with a smile, “it is for me to create.”

Such a response did not endear him to his peers.

In fact, as time went by they became more and more suspicious of what they considered his eccentric lifestyle. It just wasn’t acceptable to be cheerful. They began to shun the unconventional tick, calling him an abnormal arachnid and making him an outcast within their community.

Although their narrow outlook saddened Thomas, he felt no ill will toward them. He believed that if he remained true to his nature, and others could see the contentment he derived by doing so, then they would learn by his example and possibly consider approaching their own lives differently, more meaningfully.

It was this purposeful and optimistic approach, which enabled Thomas to live his authentic life.

So the satisfied tick went about his day searching for his next meal, sleeping where he found warmth, and languishing among a variety of dry vegetation until he was able to hitch a ride and find room and board with some generous host. All the while he would look for that daily, unexpected glory: a sudden flurry of butterflies, a wildflower growing in the middle of a dried out stump, or the best but most elusive of all, the meeting of a potential friend.

Thomas always looked forward to the possibility of forming friendships. The opportunity of sharing his ideals and philosophies with another, especially one who might not be living authentically, inspired him. A teacher by choice, he looked forward to helping others recognize and live their potential. This possibility more than any other unexpected glory, encouraged Thomas to face each new dawn, each uncertain destination, with eagerness. Who knew what day would bring the prospect of a new friend?

Yes, Thomas believed a stranger was just a friend whose name he didn't yet know. Unfortunately, most "strangers" didn't take too kindly to making friends with a wandering tick. When rebuffed, the ever-hopeful Thomas would smile, and then dust himself off and continue his travels, finding glory in life and pleasure with the creature he was.

There came a day one winter when Thomas found himself leaning against a warm mottled-brown mound picking at his teeth with one of his middle right legs, a favorite past-time. Suddenly he lost his footing as the earth began to shake. Trying to settle all eight

feet firmly on the ground he turned toward the high-pitch whine coming from behind him.

This was no dirt hill, as he had originally thought. It was a really dirty dog. One may wonder why a tick didn't know it was leaning against a dog, the meal of preference, but the fact was that Thomas was no longer a young arachnid. He had reached the wise old age of two and half years and his sense of smell had dulled somewhat.

However, realizing his current situation, he now understood why his stomach had been rumbling so loudly, *it* had recognized his location instantly.

As the dog stopped scratching at the itch behind its ear – possibly caused by a relative of Thomas' – Thomas began the arduous task of working his way up from the dog's rump and through the dirt-matted, coarse hair. He squirmed between strands looking for a nice place to picnic.

“Humph!”

Thomas looked up. The dog had twisted its head around and was now balefully glaring at the tick.

“Good day!” greeted Thomas in his genuinely kind way.

“Good day?”

The Red Heeler twitched his coat in an effort to send Thomas back to earth.

“Why yes,” called out Thomas as he held on tight. “The sun is out,” he shouted, “there is no rain in sight, and the breeze is as soft as a butterfly.”

“Humph!” The dog shook harder, all four of its feet lifting from the ground. Dirt went flying. Thomas remained.

“Excuse me,” called Thomas. “EXCUSE ME!” he yelled as best he could. The dog settled and turned with a disgruntled sigh.

“What?”

“Since you are about to be my host, I believe we should introduce ourselves,” the tick suggested in his proper tone. “My name is Thomas. I want to thank you for the opportunity to dine with you on such a fine day.”

“Ya mean ‘dine *on* me,’ ya little vampire. Now off!” The dog growled, baring healthy, and sharp, canine teeth.

“You know, you have a bit of fur right about there,” Thomas mentioned, pointing with one of his left legs to identify the exact spot between the dog’s teeth. “You have not been chasing the rancher’s cattle have you?”

A paw, claws reaching, swiped near the spot at the tail where Thomas was calmly setting up to feast.

“‘You have not been chasin’ the rancher’s cattle’,” echoed the dog snidely. “Duh! I’m a cattle dog, ya fool! Of course I’ve ben chasin’ the rancher’s cows.” With Thomas so close to the tail, the dog had difficulty reaching him.

“You have not told me your name yet, kind host.”

“Host! You’re readyin’ to feast on my blood, ya parasite. I’m not yer host and I did *not* invite ya to ‘dine’ with me, let alone *on* me.” A growl sounded deep in the dog’s throat as he twisted his body to better reach the itchy annoyance.

Thomas shook his head slowly. The dog was a short-tempered sort of fellow, he decided. Thomas knew because he could tell such things. This mean-spirited behavior was just the dog’s way of trying to project his frustrations onto Thomas.

“Oh really,” Thomas replied in a stuffy tone of disapproval when the dog had tried to shake him off again. He brushed at the dust that was floating down upon his shell. “We cannot have a

civilized conversation if I do not know your name. What does the rancher call you?”

“Why should I tell ya?” the dog questioned petulantly.

“It would make conversing with each other much easier as well as much more pleasant, I would think.” Thomas waited but the dog was silent. “The rancher – I am sure he has given you a proper name. What does he call you?”

“Usually somethin’ ’long the line of ‘dang-blasted dog’ or ‘old mangy mutt’,” the dog muttered, pausing in his attempts to dislocate the tick. “Me, a full-blood Queensland Heeler, descendent of the great Dingo, can ya believe it? I ain’t no mutt.” The disgruntled hound finally planted his butt in the dirt and stared off toward the ranch house in the distance.

Thomas sighed deeply and loudly.

“Yes, yes, yes, I understand that he may have his pet names for you. Yet surely he has given you a *proper* name?”

“Duke,” was the grumbled reply.

“Duke,” acknowledged Thomas with a smiling nod. “Yes, it fits you. It is an excellent name for such a strong dog as yourself!” He wiggled his body and settled upon a clean spot of hide. “It is evident that you must work very hard for the rancher,” he declared, nodding his head toward the clods of dirt that still clung to the dog’s fur.

“Ya bet yer little tick heart I do,” confirmed Duke with heat. “I gotta chase those stupid cows from mornin’ ‘till night, through dusty brush and muddy waterin’ holes. And does he appreciate me? NO!” he barked before Thomas could respond. “Oh, he throws me scraps from his table at times, and occasionally gives me a hoof from a pig he’s butchered. But he don’t appreciate the *real* me.” Duke sniffed, turning to pitifully peruse the pasture in front of him.

“I can see how you feel and that you believe he does not,” Thomas agreed gently. “You protect his cattle from all sorts of unsavory threats. I am sure you patrol his home and property and keep it safe as well. You are a gift and you feel that he just does not realize it.”

“Why does a scrawny bug like ya care how he treats me?”

“Arachnid,” Thomas corrected from habit. He gave the question a moment’s thought. “It is just my nature to care,” he finally replied with a smile. “It is my choice to be caring *and* insightful and I detect, from what you have said, that you do your best for the rancher and you feel you should be more appreciated for doing so.” He paused a moment then asked, “Am I right?”

“Guess.”

Duke turned black-lined eyes toward Thomas and cocked his head to the side. His anger was subsiding quickly in the company of genuine sympathy for his troubles. “I’m a pretty sensitive fellow, ya know,” he shared

“Yes, I can see that about you,” Thomas nodded with a smile.

“I’ve got feelin’s just like the next dog.”

“Sure you do.” Thomas agreed.

“I deserve to be pampered and coddled just like them dang cats of his.”

“Cuddled and brushed and petted, too,” added Thomas.

Duke settled himself in the dirt and curled his body gently, resting his head on his side to better see Thomas.

“They say that this is a dog’s life, ya know,” he said conversationally. “I was born a cattle dog. Chasin’ and roundin’ up strays all day is my job, my life.” Duke looked over at the beasts of burden of which he was speaking. “That’s what I do; I keep them cows in line. It’s what I have to do every freakin’, single day.”

“‘*Have to*’ is such a chore,” Thomas commented. The dog narrowed his eyes in bafflement, so Thomas hoped, for such a look made the dog appear somewhat frightening. “Whenever you ‘have to’ do something,” the tick explained, “it becomes a chore. You feel your day is filled with ‘have-to’ chores.”

“Right, yeah, that’s exactly right,” Duke nodded. “I *have to* do the cattle dog thing. If the rancher only knew...” he drifted off in thought a moment, and then leaned in a bit closer. “The truth is, I’ve always fancied bein’ a –” his eyes darted from side to side and he lowered his voice, “promise not to tell?” Thomas wondered whom he would share a secret with, but promised anyway. “I’ve always dreamed ’bout bein’ a ... a Frisbee-jumper!” Duke looked away in embarrassment, apparently at the thought of a working dog participating in such a frivolous sport, but Thomas was pleased.

“Oh how wonderful!” he declared excitedly. Being a tick of an enthusiastic nature, Thomas always enjoyed hearing tales of others pursuing their bliss. However, he rarely had the opportunity to hear such stories. “I believe you would make a wonderful Frisbee-jumper!”

Duke grinned knowingly, this time showing his strong teeth in a much kindlier manner.

“Ya think so?” he asked with a hint of quiet sarcasm.

“Oh yes!” smiled Thomas with certainty. “I can just see you, those powerful hind legs of yours springing you up and into the air, that strong jaw grabbing the Frisbee as it glides along the breeze.” Thomas clapped his most recently grown front two hands, his eyes closed as he imagined the scene. “You would be wonderful,” he sighed.

“Yer a bit odd fer a tick ain’t ya?” scoffed Duke.

Thomas laughed. “I believe I may very well be! Is that not marvelous? It is a gift to myself,” he continued, “to find pleasure in

the life I live and the life around me. Like you will find when you become a Frisbee-jumper!”

The sigh from the dog almost lifted Thomas from the skin he had yet to settle back into.

“Not meant to be.”

“What?” exclaimed Thomas. “Why not?”

Duke lifted his shoulders then let them fall.

“I’m a cattle dog.” He nodded toward the livestock grazing in the dry grass. “This is the life I’m meant to lead.”

“Oh no, no, no,” cried Thomas. He had begun to feel a companionship with this hound and disliked the idea that his new friend was living a life that made him less than happy. “Just because you are a cattle dog it does not mean you have to be *just* a cattle dog. It does not mean you cannot pursue your true happiness!”

“Well, heck! Maybe that notion applies to ticks, but it don’t apply to us dogs,” Duke answered dismissively.

“Sure it does!”

Thomas continued to be saddened by Duke’s lack of faith in the possibility of living his dream. So much so that he had completely lost his appetite. Since Thomas had found contentment living his truth, the teacher in him wanted to help Duke do so as well.

“Do you not understand?” he stood tall, trying to raise himself above the stubby strands of Duke’s course coat. “You may have been born a cattle dog, but it does not mean that you should only chase cows all your life! That is just what the rancher wants you to do. But know this, a bird is born to fly, but the roadrunner is happiest when he strolls down the street. An elephant was born to the land but loves to swim. Duke, you need to be true your nature,

allow yourself to live your *authentic* life if you truly want to find happiness!”

“Ah, my little bug-buddy!”

“Arachnid.”

Duke smiled indulgently, as he wiggled more comfortably in the dirt.

“Happiness is not fer dogs,” he said gently, as if he didn’t want to hurt the tick’s feelings. “We live to serve, to please our masters, to be loyal and trustworthy and hard workin’. I’ve responsibilities. Maybe I ain’t happy ‘bout them. Maybe I ain’t livin’ my ‘au – then – tic life’ as ya say, but I’m a fine cattle dog, which provides me with a warm doghouse and a meal everyday, co-op food or not. That’s the most this old dog can expect from life.” Duke shrugged a lazy shoulder, “Guess I just gotta be satisfied with that.”

Thomas wondered why anyone would settle for less than what he or she could be. There must be a way to help Duke realize his potential. Thinking hard, he found himself pacing up and down the dog’s tail creating an itch. Duke thumped the tail once, tipping the tick to the ground. Thomas quickly recovered and worked his way back onto and up the tail to look directly into the coiled dog’s eyes.

“My dear friend, there is so much more to life,” Thomas began, taking a deep, steadying breath and settling himself comfortably within the fur. “Life is not mere existence. It’s a celebration! You breathe! Everyday you breathe this precious air and it fills your lungs and it helps pump your blood and you move your muscles and you run!” Thomas laughed. “You run!”

Duke shrugged again. “Okay?”

“When you run, my friend, how does it feel?”

“What?” Duke pondered the question a moment. “I – I don’t know, never gave it much thought.” He lowered his head on his paws “Ran this mornin’,” he said, more to himself. “It felt, hmm,” he glanced at Thomas and smiled, “good.”

Duke chuckled as he remembered. “Felt like, like flyin’ would feel, I ‘magine,” he continued, apparently reflecting back on those mindless moments of chase. He straightened, his forearms lying warm in the dirt. “Sometimes when I run I barely feel the ground. And the cows, dimwits that they are, think they can get away, but I cut left,” he ducked his head to the left, “I cut right,” he ducked it to the right, “I slide underneath and come ‘round their backside!” He laughed as he ducked his head as if scooting under the belly of a cow. “That’s when I nip their heels to make sure they know they ain’t gettin’ away!” Without thinking he rolled over onto his back and wiggled with delight.

“Ah, ah, help!” came a squeak from beneath him. Instantly, Duke jumped onto all fours and glanced anxiously around, feet shuffling the dirt. “Please! Hold still!” begged Thomas. Duke glanced behind him and saw the tick frantically holding on to the last hair of his tail. He promptly sat his butt down, curled his tail up, setting Thomas gently on the stubble fur of his back.

“Sorry,” mumbled Duke. Thomas dusted himself off, counted and ensured he still had all eight of his limbs, and then smiled up at Duke.

“You love to run,” the breathless tick stated simply.

“Yeah,” agreed Duke. “Felt good this mornin’.” Then he frowned, anger settling into his brown eyes, “Till that stupid calf ran into the wash. It was all muddy from the rains yesterday.” He nodded at his coat.

“Ah, that explains it,” said Thomas, scurrying over another patch of dirt. He looked for a clean spot of skin. “Have you *ever* Frisbee jumped?”

Duke looked off into the distance, his eyes unfocused.

“Yeah,” he answered simply.

Thomas waited but the dog remained silent. He let his friend ponder his thoughts while the tick pondered his own. The two were silent for a bit, enjoying the sun, enjoying the breeze, and oddly enough, enjoying each other’s company. Finally Thomas spoke, “You need to live the life you are meant to live, Duke. Not the life you feel you *have to* live.”

Duke raised a brown dot of an eyebrow.

“Told ya, I am,” he said, bored now with the subject. “I’m a cattle dog. I chase cattle. I’m livin’ the life I’m *meant* to live.”

Thomas released a deep, slow sigh.

“I do not think you understand. You think that because you are a cattle dog, you are meant to chase cattle.” Duke nodded his agreement. “I say you are a Frisbee-jumper and you are meant to jump for Frisbees.”

A whistle broke the silence that followed Thomas’ statement. Out of habit Duke stood instantly, prepared to obey his master’s call. He stopped and turned his head to look at Thomas, tucked between the coarse hairs of his spine. He found himself hesitant to end a conversation that he had to admit, albeit reluctantly, he found intriguing.

“Don’t think ya should settle in, the rancher checks for ticks at chow time,” Duke said. (*Want to read more? Download your copy now at: [Imagine Nation](#)*)