



A Walk in the Rain, by Jeff Foster

As the story goes, I was walking through the rain on a cold Autumn evening in Oxford. The sky was getting dark; I was wrapped up warm in my new coat. And suddenly and without warning, the search for something more apparently fell away, and with it all separation and loneliness.

And with the death of separation, I was everything that arose: I was the darkening sky, I was the middle aged man walking his golden retriever, I was the little old lady hobbling along in her waterproofs. I was the ducks, the swans, the geese, the funny looking bird with the red streak on its forehead. I was the trees in all their autumnal glory, I was the sludge sticking to my feet, I was my body, all of it, arms and legs and torso and face and hands and feet and neck and hair and genitals, the whole damn lot. I was the raindrops falling on my head (although it was not my head, I did not own it, but it was undeniably there, and so to call it "my head" is as good as anything). I was the splish-splash of water on the ground, I was the water collecting into puddles, I was the water swelling the pond until it looked fit to burst its banks, I was the trees soaked by water, I was my coat soaked by water, I was the water soaking everything, I was everything being soaked, I was the water soaking itself.

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And everything that for so long had seemed so ordinary had suddenly become so extraordinary, and I wondered if, in fact, it hadn't been this way all along: that perhaps for my whole life it had been this way, so utterly alive, so clear, so vibrant. Perhaps in my lifelong quest to reach the spectacular and the dramatic, I had missed the ordinary, and with it, and through it, and in it, the utterly extraordinary.

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And the utterly extraordinary on this day was awash with rain, and I was not separate from any of it, that is to say, I was not there at all. As the old Zen master had said upon hearing the sound of the bell ringing, "there was no I, and no bell, just the ringing", so it was on this day: there was no "I" experiencing this clarity, there was only the clarity, only the utterly obvious presenting itself in each and every moment.

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Of course, I had no way of knowing any of this at the time. At the time, thought was not there to claim any of this as an "experience". There was just what was happening, but no way of knowing it. The words came later.

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And there was an all-pervading feeling that everything was okay with the world, there was an equanimity and a sense of peace which seemed

to underlie everything there was; it was as though everything was simply a manifestation of this peace, as if nothing existed apart from peace, in its infinite guises. And I was the peace, and the duck over there was it too, and the wrinkly old lady still waddling along was the peace, and the peace was all around, everything just vibrated with it, this grace, this presence that was utterly unconditional and free, this overwhelming love that seemed to be the very essence of the world, the very reason for it, the Alpha and the Omega of it all.

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--Jeff Foster, in ' _Beyond Awakening

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