



Fresh Rain

A Quarterly e-Journal of the Open Path / Sufi Way

SPRING 2017

IN THIS ISSUE: Mystic Nonsense by Pir Elias, Pain as Free Medicine by Amrita Skye Blaine, Poems by Jeanne Rana, Carol Barrow, and Sabah Raphael Reed



Dear Friends,

Free Medicine—how I love this two-word expression Elias conceived. He starts us off this quarter with a playful—but serious (yet another of life’s paradoxes)—piece called “Mystic Nonsense.” It covers vast ground with a light touch. Carol Barrow offers the question and answer we all need in this time. My short essay looks at free medicine through the lens of pain.

Our poets and prayer-writers: Jeanne Rana pleasures us with the many ways we and our world are free in her poem, “free medicine.” Carol Barrow, in “Imaginations,” points to immediacy. In “First Thing in the Morning,” she shows us how to wake up, literally, in the morning. “That Might Keep Us Very Busy” pushes us to enlarge our understanding of love. Sabah Raphael Reed’s “Lessons of the Dark Light” points us toward the wholeness of dark and light.

Mèhèra, in her kindness and generosity, found quotes from Sufi Inayat Khan that circle gratitude. Thank you, Mèhèra, for supporting *Fresh Rain* in this way.

The theme for the summer solstice issue is “Service.” The autumn theme will be “Seeing Through Division.” Can you find a shorter way of saying that? Please write, and send me articles and poems on these topics. You are the blood that keeps *Fresh Rain* alive.

with love to you all,
Amrita

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Mystic Nonsense

by Pir Elias Amidon

How strange it is we have forgotten where we came from and what we are. Immigrants from a place of light, we take our turns here building nests and finding food and soon we forget the Home we started from. This world makes us fear that place. We think there's nothing there, but we needn't worry. That place and this place are the same place, though they're not a place.

There is no place where the river's current is, no place where sunlight collects. There is only this Pouring Forth, and there is nothing from which, or into which, it pours.

It's not easy to talk about this, since it doesn't seem to make any sense. But it's helpful to have a feel for it because that feel can relax whatever fear we may have about dying, or living for that matter. After all, if a drop of water cried out it was afraid to flow over a rock, or rise up into a cloud, would that help anything?

The colors of this world are the colors of heaven, just from the inside out. Here we see the colors, there we are them. Here we play in God's Beauty, there we are that Beauty. Since here and there are fictions, everything's all right already. Free Medicine! Purifying, revivifying, sanctifying, we are the Holy Light we bathe in, we are the Good News we seek.

Pouring forth, neither you nor I have a moment to waste. Facing the firing squad we smile and forgive. Even grief is

a blessing. A solitary soldier comes to mop our blood and sees his reflection crying.

If a thousand Buddhas hovered in the air, you wouldn't see anything. All the dark oceans are empty light. After all, clear space doesn't part around us when we walk together, arm in arm by the river, confessing our love. But who are you, my love, who? Even you don't know.

The fountain flings its water-drops all night long, and inside each one, stars are twinkling. No one sees them. In the morning, ducks swim under, taking a shower.

To follow the way that this doesn't make sense leads beyond sense-making to Presence-glimpsing, though without imagining a thing that is present. Our Enormous Home is not a place, though every place is Home. God is not a thing, though everything is God. God does not exist because God is not something already made. God is This. Like God, we too do not exist and are not something already made.

Because we imagine that we are something that does exist, we imagine we can die. We can't. That which does not exist cannot die. What we call God and what we call us is divine Delight, and where does Delight exist? No place. Just This!

Does that make sense?



Pain as Free Medicine

by Amrita Skye Blaine

In early February, I ruptured a disk in my low back: first an ache, then a burning two-inch poker, then an angry nerve's lightning bolt searing down my leg. For the next week, until I saw a spinal specialist who prescribed the right nerve medication, I hobbled with a cane, couldn't sleep, was unable to sit at my desk, and had no appetite. Intractable pain is exhausting.

And yet!

Sometimes, while lying awake, present to the moment which was busily announcing its presence—where else could I be?—I focused on severe pain as rich sensation. Although the aching and burning didn't let up, the sensations did fluctuate, always subtly shifting. For brief periods, the margin between agony and ecstasy melded. Such a mystery.

Other times, I rested in and as the "field" (a simpler word for "consciousness"—more plainsong, less full orchestra). That's the apparent choice: either be the sensations, or be the field in which sensations arise. In neither instance did the pain go away. Thisness is thisness—there is no choice but to be it all.

Apparent choice? No choice? Which is it? Once I heard Adyashanti answer a student's question this way: "If there's an apparent choice, make it." I giggled with delight and slipped that expression in my pocket. Of course, both—"both" is a concession to the failure of



language to express the inexpressible—are true. Neither are true. Nothing is "true."

Because of this teaching—this ever-evolving-no-place-to-land-understanding—no story formed. I had no fearful thoughts of the future, or story-building about what caused it to happen—which would have added suffering on top of acute sensation.

Gratefulness flooded for the extravagant pain, my husband's precious care, the abrupt interruption of teaching, driving, and writing. Gratitude lit me up: this apparent paradox of field and sensation, the ever-inseparable unmanifest and manifest, never other than what it is: outrageous, unstoppable, and luscious free medicine.



Those whose prayer is one of praise, if their whole life is to assume a prayerful attitude, they must carry this praise and gratitude into the smallest details of life, and feel grateful for the slightest act of kindness done to them by anybody... When a man has been able to attain this attitude of praise and thanksgiving for all things in life, then his life may indeed be called a prayerful life.

From "Pearls from the Ocean Unseen" (Sufi Inayat Khan)

Q: Beloved, what am I to do when the ways of the world hang heavy in my heart?

A: Love is the light that illumines heaviness. Turn your head. Love is hiding in plain sight.

— by Carol Barrow



free medicine

the bay is free
 with its flights
 of birds
 the dawn and twilight free
 the mountains and the stars
 my body free
 tho caring for it
 can be dear
 my mind is free
 I try
 to keep it so
 my song is free
 and lifts my soul
 my words are free
 and your words too
 my breath is free
 and all my dreams
 and most of all
 my love is free

I'm free to choose
 where I will walk
 I'm free to work
 and free to play
 I'm free to give my time away
 now that I'm old
 I'm also free
 to disregard my vanity
 I'm free to judge
 free to prefer
 tho these are dangerous elixirs
 I'm free to change
 and free to pray
 with any words I choose to say
 I'm free to forget
 get lost in moods

God always finds me anyway
 this presence
 will not go away

Jeanne Rana
 Jan 23, 2017



Imaginations

What is "past"?
Can I find "future"?
I look at You
in the golden morning light, Your
silent stillness in which
waking bird songs sing,
distant traffic hums,
a dog yells "wake up!"
This now-ness is so alive;
There is nothing else.
Your immediacy opens each moment
like a rose,
like this breath
giving way to
this one,
now to this one.
Ahhhh...
We are so here,
together,
now.
I can't find time
for imaginations of
things
that
don't
exist.

— Carol Barrow



First Thing in the Morning

I listen.

I listen and wait.

I wait.

Silence welcomes day's first light
lapping at my bedroom window.

Skin nests into soft sheets, blanket's weight
snuggles the curve of my back.

Air generously offers itself to every breath
and caresses my cool cheeks.

A thought comes, followed by another.

I remember to listen.

I listen and wait.

Listening listens.

Waiting waits.

Heart beats,
breath breathes.

You are the stillness
inside me,
around me.

I am newly born.

—Carol Barrow



That Might Keep Us Very Busy

A man yells “Get out of my country” before he kills
his brother wearing skin a different shade.

A witness tries to stop him, acts so unafraid
we call him hero,

though he says he did what anyone would do.

I say his act was love.

I say let’s spread love by naming it.

Love keeps drivers in their lanes, calls 911
when mistakes are made. Love adopts
the child loved enough to be let go. It flies the sparrow,
grows the corn, and rains the reservoirs full.

Love is a wind clearing the air, promises
kept, an old woman’s prayer. Love
is the sun and the quiet of night. Love
for a country can lead one to fight those
who love peace and basic human rights.

I’m not saying it’s easy to find love
in the man yelling poison, or the senator
erasing rights of young girls and boys; I’m
just saying as long as we’re keeping score,
dividing our lives into what is good
and what’s abhorred, let’s play fair
and spend our days noticing
all the love that comes our way.

Let’s spread love by naming it.

That might keep us very busy.

—Carol Barrow



Lessons of the Dark Light

in gratitude to Rabia

Wherever the dark light shines,
move toward it.

There, in the embers, the dying hearth, the slag,
lies the pearl, Wisdom.

To touch it is to be
transfixed,
transformed.

Tremble, tremble!

This teaching makes everything
impossibly whole.

Only Her alchemy
brings dark seed into life.

— Sabah Raphael Reed

Upcoming Programs 2017



Free Medicine Two-Day Workshop

SpiritCircles
Ya Wali, Munich, Germany
Elias Amidon
April 8 – 9, 2017



Free Medicine Six-Day Retreat

Buckland Hall,
Wales, U.K.
Elias Amidon
June 25 – 30, 2017



Continuous Realization

Advanced Six-Month Retreat with Elias Amidon
Himmelreich Retreat Center, Germany
March 30 – April 2, 2017
October 12 – 15, 2017



Vision Quest

Twelve-day program in wild nature
Mallorca
Balearic Islands, Spain
July 12 – 24, 2017



Two-Week Open Path Retreat

Nada Hermitage,
Crestone, Colorado
Elias Amidon
May 4 – 18, 2017



Two-Week Open Path Retreat

Nada Hermitage,
Crestone, Colorado
Elias Amidon
November 2 – 16, 2017