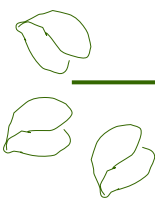
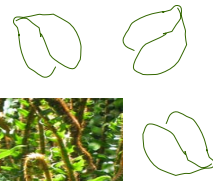


Muse



Impermanence



Recently I attended a reunion with a group of incredible, incomparable, and indescribable individuals with whom I proudly stood shoulder to shoulder for a time. It was in their midst that I unearthed a previously-fading faith in humanity; felt embraced and cherished in a distinctive community and lighted upon true love. I consider them to be from a time in my life I might call my hay-days and time is marching on. Every time I see them, my spirit swells, I laugh, and my heart rends. There are some things that I wonder if we ever stop being sad about. There are only memories of what once was. I can hear the echoes of their voices, the jibes, the demands, the connection, the talents, and the trust that no matter what, when the chips are down, each could count on another. And now they have long moved on. Dispersed into the universe on their own unique journeys – different parts of the world, different jobs, and different



relationships. Some people have passed on. Some are now grandparents. Some are forgotten. I may be forgotten. And my soul is filled with a magnificent melancholy. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to at least have the memory of this small colourful village and to miss them. My loves.

I reflect on impermanence. The Buddhists teach to accept this as part of life – then you will have peace. They believe that because things are imperma-

This, too, shall pass.

nent, attachment to them is futile, and leads to suffering. I see the truth in it but I find resistance at times. I don't want to let go of the people I love, the places I adore. I don't want to see the gray hairs, aging faces, and time marching on without even asking me. Marching toward impermanence.

I get angry at *time* sometimes. Angry at death. Angry at change and loss. Why? Why must this happen? My being aches with awareness of mortality.

The clothes I'm wearing, the house I live in. The community

I'm a part of. My friends. My family. My beloved pets. Those nearest and dearest to my heart. Me. All just visiting my life. Who knows what the next minute holds. And now? Impermanent. *You* may have perhaps lived through a loss recently. Life is like a bar of soap – ever dwindling and dissolving into ephemeral bubbles to be washed away in an enigmatic and vast tide.

That bouquet of flowers I coveted so and inhaled its sweetness and life into my lungs will be crumbling to dust between my fingers in a little while and I will only have the memory and even that may fade or disappear. A gentle, transient spirit of flowers visited me and left a pleasant sensory recollection in the deep cellar of my consciousness.

Expect change.

Eckhart Tolle is ever so right. The only thing we ever have is the present moment. We cannot live in the past – it is gone. We cannot live in the future – it doesn't exist yet. And yet our minds wander into the past, what we said, did, heard, felt. And reflects on tomorrow – what could come, our hopes and our fears. None of these



exist. Only the *now* exists. The breath you are inhaling. Reading these words. Feeling the air on your skin. Hearing distant voices or the gentle rain. Only the now is here. The lush green of life outside – also impermanent but here for a visit. I expand my awareness to a lonely beach where the grey water gently laps at a beach blanketed in perfectly round rocks shaped by billions of ocean waves. Seagulls cry their mournful revelry. Tangy green cedar mingles with saltiness in the cold, dewy and lush air. Immersed in the ocean, the remains of our soap bubbles infinitely miniscule, still moving, evolving, and changing itself and the world. In this moment everything exists. And everything is impermanent. I can be anywhere in the universe right now. In my head. In this moment. In my past. In my future. In my blindness or in seeing. And it's temporary. It will change. It will move on. It will grow. It will die.



When it comes to suffering though, the idea of impermanence comes as a tremendous relief. This pain is only temporary. It will be gone and forgotten one day. Living in the present can be a salve to the breaking heart. Cool water for the hot sting of scorching words. Yesterday ceases to exist. All that remains, all that ever remains, is now.

I know that it is my attachment to my ideas that will cause me pain. It is my grabbing on that will eventually pierce my heart.

"We can never bathe twice in the same river."

Heraclitus

Suddenly things become perishable and what we hold dear is ripped from our grasp. And then pain comes. But as Thich Nhat Hanh points out, we may not experience a tremendous loss when a flower dies. We expect it to. We know that it is



impermanent. It is the other things that we are attached to that strike us with grief. When we accept that things are temporary, we can turn our focus to living and loving and making us and those around us happy - now.

Why does any of this happen? Why do we even exist? I don't know. At this stage of my life I believe this though. I believe that the gentle rain is a whispery solitude – not an abysmal

thing to be endured. I believe that the sadness I have is sacred. I am inspirited and enriched by those who live life in all its glory or tragedy. Like the Phoenix burning up in flames and rising from the ashes – again and again and again. Into the present moment. And there have been countless moments for me to cherish and I hope there will be more. I will choose to experience and witness them. All of them. In their rage or love or disinterest. How many of these moments do we have? How will you have lived life if, in this moment, you were away in your mind?

Like the Velveteen Rabbit, are we waiting to be *real*? Life will pass you by.

"If you find your here and now intolerable and it makes you unhappy, you have three options: remove yourself from the situation, change it or accept it totally."

Eckhart Tolle

And so I deeply relish the warm skin and breathe of a loved one. I delve into the delicious colours of life all sad and blue and passionate and crimson and hard and dusky and tawny and lost and viridian and alive. I swill the taste of air breathed by this earth and all the creatures present and impermanent. I am beholden to this star-speckled universe for

"If you suffer, it is not because things are impermanent. It is because you believe things are permanent."

Thich Nhat Hanh



the gift of feeling, and experiencing life and all the prickly, beautiful, empty, full, moving, changing, charging forces. Now. Because I choose so.

"Without impermanence, life is not possible. How can we transform our suffering if things are not impermanent? How can the situation in the world improve? We need impermanence for social justice and for hope.

With impermanence, every door is open for change."

Thich Nhat Hanh

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