

## How do I connect with Nature?

Past: I remember those long windswept coastal walks. The exhilaration of climbing difficult peaks, reaching the top and looking down – a sense of peace and also of elation. Rolling hill walks, muscles aching from the stretches, moorland and mud, anoraks and soggy lunches, and the delight when the sun came out, stripping off the layers, basking in cloudless skies. The satisfying accompaniment when you don't have to speak – just walk.

Present: The sadness that because of my disability, the deteriorating torn meniscus, the operations, I can no longer walk for longer than 20 minutes without pain. And it's better on grass and moors – rather than pavements. But I *can* still walk — and so I carry those remote wild places, that are difficult to reach, within me, with gratitude and warmth in my heart.

Now I connect to Nature in small and everyday things. The herbs growing on my window sill, the plants I've potted on the steps down to my 'wild' garden as I apologetically sweep aside the daily renewed spiders' webs. The seeds of remembrance for a dear friend who died, the touchstone for another, and the mossy figure sculpted when I was young. The Buddha, the collected rocks and skeletal bonewood that surround the pond, the sometime frogs that stare at me without moving – and sometimes let me stroke them.

Sitting early morning where the sun hits, being still, reflecting, receiving, then writing. Black coffee. The sound of water trickling into the pond. Breeze rustling the shrubs and bushes, the limetree, Japanese fern, and elderberry. Cats purring or stretching on the grass, - or in the evening sitting – in that quiet still hour - watching the sun set and the moon rise.

Some weekends in the remote Suffolk cottage – surrounded by fields of maize or hay bales, wild poppies and grasses, where pheasants peck and the tree is heavy with plums, where the sky seems vaster and moodier than elsewhere and the birds noisier and more expressive.

I write poems in Nature, which describe and celebrate. I read about wild and remote landscapes – of places I may never get to – but can imagine. I remember - how in the past - despite my strong muscled legs, youth and stamina, I was sometimes afraid of Nature, of some kinds of landscapes, of the sea. Seas and oceans can still unsettle and challenge me – and I both fear and am drawn to them. But I love being by the sea, at the sea's edge, watching the light changing on the horizon.

How far I've come since then – for despite my damaged legs I seem to be able to trust Earth to hold me, I connect more deeply and gratefully to Nature, the Great Mother, ... delight in the softbelly of moss and moor, the zoftig mud.

Parking my car tonight, I see two thin fox cubs, huddled close together on the pavement, watching me, their eyes glittering orange in the black night. A cat slips

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under another parked car just next to the cubs ... they sit still – alongside - night creatures, urban Nature ...

## **How does Nature enrich me?**

From the first early morning glimpse from my bedroom window – there are trees. Beautiful and expressive, they greet me – they've given me shelter, retreat, have hidden and protected me. They mirror and accompany my moods. Green and lush in summer, glorious russets and copper reds in autumn, and graceful or mournful, bare limbed in winter ... until those first few buds sprout through in early spring ... they speak to me, their movements reveal how windy, how calm, they dance and titter, chatter and giggle, and sometimes I swear they groan, sigh and weep.

Nature's colours dazzle and delight. I used to paint landscapes – now I write. ... the small purple flower that pushes through concrete amazes me. The delicate persistence of spider's webs. Green calms and soothes me – it is the colour of the heart. I feel at peace in green. The whiteness of those small star shaped flowers is exquisite, and the thorny deep black velvet rose disquieting. My eyes delight in the shapes and colours, my nose sniffs greedily at the jasmine and honeysuckle. A line of ants shift a piece of leaf, snails leave their silver trails.

There's a timelessness in Nature – a reminder that things repeat and go on – with or without us. Seedlings sprout and grow, the rivers dry and flood, there's ebb and flow, the moon and sun disappear and are not gone, seasons change – and the sky remains. Grains of sand are stones worn down – over time – and stones are eternity.

I know when my body dies it will return to the sand and the soil, that moist richness that teems with invisible life. Knowing that heartens and reassures me – that Nature never dies, is eternal, a returning cycle – and that I am part of it. I am Nature.

*And did you get what you wanted from this life? even so?*

*I did.*

*And what did you want?*

*To call myself beloved.*

*To feel myself beloved on the earth.*

From Late Fragments – by Raymond Carver

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*zofrig – a Yiddish word that means juicy, rich, sensual.*