



# *The Sound of Rain*

*Supporting the work of Emily Carson*

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## **Suffering**

Transcribed from a sitting with Emily Carson, Monday, August 4, 2008

The heart of your fear is nothing compared to the heart of your suffering. Refusal is suffering. Whatever you are afraid of, it can't be worse than that. Where you live now, at arm's length from what you fear but in the midst of your own refusal, is worse than anything else you will ever face. No matter what approaches, whether it is death or light, pain or loss, all that is allowed becomes the same essence, different in experience but the same in substance, the same release. Suffering is your commitment to your own refusal; suffering is your allegiance to non-surrender, the promise you have made that nothing will get you, nothing will harm you, and you will not be beaten again. But to be beaten, to arrive in the heart of your own fear and stay there without wavering and without questions, is to know, once and for all, that there is nothing that cannot be taken from you, that there is no one you must be and nothing that you need to fight for. If you could commit yourself to that surrender with even half the strength of your commitment to your refusal, you could practically fly, you could feel anything, risk anything, allow anything to consume you. Suffering is one thing; it is to look at what is right in front of you and say, I will not allow that. Suffering is only this; it is not pain, it is not sorrow, it is not dying, and it is not fear. Suffering is refusal. Happiness is surrender; there is no more succinct point I can make, no easier way to say it. You must allow what you fear to take you over. This is the case no matter what you fear. You must allow it to devour you until you are inside the thing you thought you could not stand, and you find from within it that every experience is bearable and that the only thing you ever really wanted was to be free of the suffering of your refusal. Every word you use for the things you love—freedom, kindness, God, love—all of these are terms for the same one release from suffering; they mean the same thing, they mean the word “yes.” Happiness is that word, “yes,” as is love, as is God, as is enlightenment, as is peace. You need one thing only and that is to say “yes”

and to bear what you think cannot be borne, and so to find what you do not know. Please consider a change in your commitments; it is worth any shift you can make at all.

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## Questions and Answers

*Q: Your opening talk was...really kind of what I've been dealing with a little bit; I've been trying to get in touch with the fear that I've lived with in the pit of my stomach all the time. M. and I were...working on it the other day, and he had me look at it, ask guidance what it was, and I got "fear of retribution"...so I've been trying just to be with it...and I feel like I could touch it a little bit, and then I recoil and I bounce off and suffer, basically. So I guess the question is just maybe what you could say about it....*

What are you aware of being afraid of?

*Well that's what I'm kind of working on is trying to become aware. I know I've been living with this pit in my stomach,...it's been this ongoing process. Consciously,...I couldn't really put my finger on what I'm afraid of per se,...it's just sort of this general fear of something really bad happening to me...and when you said "You won't be beaten again," I felt the fear in me going "Oh yeah, you will be,"...I couldn't believe it, it feels like it's so afraid of something like that happening, and it doesn't believe that it's not going to happen.*

I would never try to convince you that the consequences that you're afraid of won't happen again. Even if they won't, even if they can't, such an argument would be futile because you believe that you are in the same jeopardy that you have always believed you were in. You believe that what has happened is imminent. You make no distinction at all, in fact, between the past and the present, nor any, really, between the past and the future. You believe that your doom is imminent and so all I can say to you is, maybe it is. Whatever might happen, whatever you feel in the pit of your stomach to be the possible unbearable consequence of your doing the wrong thing, I say, maybe that will happen, maybe you will be faced with that. There are no guarantees. You have set yourself up with as many safeties as you can manufacture, but you can always fall, you can always be beaten again. Whatever you know about what you're afraid of, even if all you can feel is a general vague sense that something bad is about to happen to you, you must use that actively, don't ignore it, don't try to put it aside. If anything, I would say, try to breathe life into it, try to heighten your experience of it, try to know it. The more you admit to yourself and accept that there might be something bad right around the corner,

the more you will begin to feel exactly what you're afraid of, and so, the more you will have to work with. Whatever word feels like it addresses the crux of your fear in any particular moment—whether that is “retribution” or “beaten” or something else you come across—use that word, right then and there, to feel that you are afraid of that; and always, always tell yourself, “I could face that; that could be coming,” because it's true, we're never safe, we're just lulled into a sense of security by impermanent things that we believe should be stable. Nothing is certain, S. You could be beaten again. Let that in and see if it does anything to inflame your fear—and if it does, then good. Let your fear be inflamed, let it guide you into what you're afraid will happen, what you must allow to happen, let it lead you into the heart of what you're afraid of. No one will make you do this, but eventually, even if you are not beaten down again, your suffering from your running from this will wear you down itself, and out of desperation you'll finally return to what is really your only option—and that is to surrender to anything you find yourself afraid of. I think it's better to do it now and save yourself a lot of unnecessary suffering, and give yourself the chance at unprecedented happiness.

*Q: My fear of rejection, I'm starting to understand, just completely controls me, and I don't feel very courageous but I know that that's in me; I felt that when I was a little boy, I stood up to fear and I know I was all there, I've had that experience, but I can't seem to find it now.*

What did you stand up to as a little boy, fear of what?

*I was afraid of the devil, that the devil was under the bed or in the room with me, and I stood up on the bed and told him, “Come,” I was ready for him.*

If the devil were here, R., you would fight him again. You haven't lost any courage you once had, you just never knew that someone could be broken so insidiously from the inside, like a slow bleeding to death from a wound you didn't even know you have. You are afraid of your heart breaking, just like you were when you were a little boy. The devil can't break your heart, only someone you love can. And so you've tried not to love, and then you tried to never disappoint the people you've loved, but neither of these worked, neither of these strategies were sustainable. The courage you need to do this is new to you, but it isn't far from you. The courage you need will come from a certain kind of knowledge, a certain kind of sober understanding that a heart can be broken into a million pieces and all the life drained out of you through loss and grief and abandonment, and still, even empty and broken, there is just as much love as there ever was. You have to let your heart break to learn that love

can't be broken, that whatever someone's approval means to you, it in fact gives you nothing. The experience of that will have to come from your heart breaking, but the promise of that, the sober understanding that that's how love works, comes from faith. Faith is all the courage we can have sometimes. Faith is the willingness to know something that you already know deep down inside you, even though you can't explain it. Faith makes you listen to what I say and realize that you already know it, even though you don't know how. And this faith will give you courage so you might face this devil as well, the one that seems to be lodged inside you, the one that threatens, it seems, even your tenderness. This devil is only a mistake you made a long time ago. It's the lie that says, "Love is destroyed when my heart is broken"; the lie that equates sorrow to real loss and emptiness to real absence. You already have the courage you need, but you have to use it as that, you have to use the faith you have to propel you into your own fear because you know already that what I'm saying is true, that there's nothing on the other side of abandonment and rejection but the empty peace of love's all-pervasive presence. That's all you risk—and all you'll find.

*Q: I recently have been running into this person who has absolutely no remorse, and I have such resistance about wanting to feel him or understand what part of him has left this huge dead spot within me; I just find it so unfathomable that I could have a person within me with absolutely no conscience, I just don't know how to approach this.*

What's wrong with having no conscience?

*I don't know. I can't even kill bugs...I don't know what it would be like to...not care, not feel.*

But if this person is actually inside you, then you must know what it feels like to have no remorse, to have no conscience.

*I've touched on it a little bit; it's very frightening.*

What is your philosophical objection to people with no conscience?

*It doesn't seem to be the experience of being human—that they don't have that experience if they have no conscience.*

And what if, inside you, is something not really human, what if you are in some real way not all human?

*I find it extremely frightening. That's where my resistance is.*

But why is it frightening?

*It's frightening because I can't feel or imagine what it would be like to be such a person.*

I'll tell you what it's like, D. It's like living without any of the ideas you have about proper or appropriate behavior; it's like living without any rules at all. It's being able to be dangerous, not because you are rebelling but because you simply want to because you enjoy it. It is to be free in a way that you have never felt yourself to be free, free of all dictates, free of all rules. How does that sound to you?

*I understand that that makes sense; I can feel...what that would be like, a little bit,...how freeing that would be to have absolutely no conscience.*

Does that sound good to you?

Yes.

Does it also sound not good to you?

Yes.

You need to first dwell on this contemplatively, and I mean in general in your life. You need to imagine as you go through your day how everything would change, how you would change, if in that moment you had no rules, you had no conscience, you were free to be dangerous, free to be anybody. You need to see it in some contrast to the way you now live, and see how different it would be to live as a person without a conscience. I'm giving this exercise first because as you do it you will feel more acutely the person in you who already wants to live like this, who already longs for it, who is controlled and suppressed by your insistence on conventional norms and rigid rules of behavior. You

will start to feel that person pulling at you. The more longing you have to find and be this person you know of inside you, the more success you will have in exploring him. So start this way. Feel as you go through your day what would be different if you were to live as this person you know of, see it for yourself. This is how you should start.

*Q: So what I've been noticing most, recently, is how much I want help from other people and trying to understand how that's because I feel like I'm not to be trusted, and I think there's something that I don't even know. It's not like I've described it, as feeling like I'm bad...—that doesn't quite describe it—and when I try and understand what the truth is around that...I'm not getting very far, and, I guess, if you can help me with what I'm avoiding or what I can't see here....*

Do you feel that your guidance can be trusted?

*Yes, and yet I hesitate because I feel like I'm developing that trust...and that I'm not always asking the right questions and I get answers that don't make sense to me.*

How often do you get answers that don't make sense to you?

*About a third of the time, and I'll either get no answer or an answer that doesn't make sense.*

Are you able to clarify those when you persist?

*I tend to give up. I think one of my defenses is confusion, and so I just give up after I get something I don't understand or I don't get an answer for a while.*

You have a memory in which you were wrong. It really was that simple. You thought you were right, you were quite convinced of it, and it turned out that you were wrong, and ever since then you felt that you could not be trusted. That is just a memory. The truth in the moment, unrelated to that experience, is that very often what you're trying to trust inside you really can't be trusted, and interestingly, it is because it is just wrong. It isn't bad or tainted in any way it is simply an error, it is making a mistake. I tend to call that, inside you, your mind. Your mind is a storehouse of past impressions giving you misinformation about the present. It essentially works like a database that is mis-cross-referenced; you see something and believe it refers to something you know about in your

mind, but it doesn't. Sometimes, when you have the feeling that you can't be trusted, that you've done something wrong or are about to do something wrong, it is only because you are reminded of your old story and of the heartbreaking consequences of that mistake. And sometimes when you have this feeling, it is because you are wrong, you are seeing something incorrectly. No matter what, you always have your guidance, and your guidance can always be trusted. If an answer you get is insufficient or doesn't come, you must persist. Every time you persist through your confusion, every time you don't forget, you end up with guidance that is useful to you. You need your guidance to help you see things clearly. And this is not because you are unusually untrustworthy, it is not because there is anything wrong with you; it is because your mind works the way most minds work, and that is, using a filter of fear, mis-referencing information from the past. You need to continue, over and over again, to feel the heartbreak, to you, from having made that mistake a long time ago; but in the present, in order to navigate your life, you need only to talk to your guidance and ask it all your questions and persist until you have answers. There is no help you really need like that help, and the vast majority who you ask your questions of are useless in the face of the wisdom of your own guidance. It is absurd not to rely on it all the time; it is your best resource, and one that you really need. Try to make the distinction between the times when you need to feel the heartbreak of your memory and the times when you just need to ask your guidance what is real. They will work well together, those two strategies. You need them both.

*Q: My hunger has been a struggle for me for quite a long time and I'm feeling very worn out by the struggle. It's both something that I'm afraid of my intensity around and also afraid of being broken—that's sort of the two sides of the...coin. ... And I have all kinds of things that I do to sort of keep myself small so that I don't feel hungry or worthy of being in that place, and just...behaviors that I do to sabotage myself and not feel that, and not even feel my body....*

You have to risk, T. You have to just pursue whatever and whoever you want. Do you do that?

*...No, I don't, I don't feel like I put myself in situations enough to even take the first step....*

You must put yourself in those situations. You must invite these full meals into your life. There is nothing you can do internally which will further prepare you. You need to throw yourself at the people you want; you need to seek them out like a prowler, like someone who's starving. Until you take these risks, you won't even be in a position to really feel the consequences of your actions, both the

fullness and the devastation. Go out and find people and have them. That is my whole assignment to you.

*Even though things are done with S. and I, we're still living under the same roof, at least for another month, and strategically or whatever on my part, it feels like I'm not willing to do that until I'm in my own home.*

That's absurd and makes no sense. You can always go to the other man's house; you don't need to have sex in S.'s bed. But don't wait, T. It does you no good.

*Q: I'm having a real tough time with my job. I'm dying at this place. I hate what I do, I hate the company that develops the software we sell, I hate participating in the economy the way I do, I hate selling, I'm tired of it all, but I have no fucking clue what to do about it. I'm stuck on how to move out of this.*

Have you tried just looking for another job in the same field?

*I don't want to be in the same field. I want out of it.*

Then what do you want into?

*That's what I'm having problems moving towards.*

Do you know anything about what you want?

*The most specific I can get is that I want to do something that...helps in a broader sense than just selling somebody something....*

What if I told you that it didn't matter whether or not you were helping anyone? Would that help to make the job you're in any more tolerable?

No.

Would it help to make the field you're in any more tolerable?

No.

Why? What do you hate about the field you're in, if it doesn't matter whether or not you help someone?

*Maybe...I've...been doing this for so long I just need something different. I just dread going to work every day....*

Do you sell software?

*Yeah.*

The process of feeling into what you really want can take a little while. You can't go overnight from being someone who has, for as long as he can remember, done some work he felt he should do into being someone who somehow makes a living doing only what he loves. That is a process, and it's one you should begin; but you don't have to be miserable in your work while you are finding out what you really love. Every day there are little things you can do to be more yourself at your work. I tell you, it doesn't matter if you help someone, but if you feel, because it is genuine to you, like helping someone, then help someone in the context of your job, just because it is something you like doing, just because you like the feeling of being kind to someone and being helpful. You also do not have to sell things in the way you have been told you do. You needn't make yourself into someone you're not so that someone will buy something they don't really need. If that is your job as it stands then you cannot help but hate it. Starting tomorrow, be mindful of yourself and your tasks all day long, and with each one of them, ask yourself, "How can I do this in a way that is true to me?" Do this for a week; if at the end of the week you found that more than half of your tasks can't be done in a way that's true to you, look for another job immediately. There's no reason why your field has to feel like a trap to you. It can be a reasonable place to spend your working life while you find out what you really love. Much of what you hate comes from feeling like you can't be yourself in your job, but I'm telling you, you must be yourself in your job. No matter what you do, this will always be the case. Do not make the mistake of imagining that people with different kind of work from you, humanitarian work or meaningful work, are somehow always themselves in their jobs. They have the same struggle you have and they have to do the same thing you will have to do. No matter what it means you'll say or do, be yourself in your job. Our economy can function with people being true to themselves; it is a lie that tells us it can't.

This is temporary. You should begin each day that you ask yourself how to be true to yourself to realize more clearly what you really love and what you would love to do. This is a step in that process. Good luck.

