

# The Jellyfish Tide

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*Amor fati (Latin phrase): love of fate.*

*Amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it . . . but love it.*

Friedrich Nietzsche

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**I**n the shallows where the waves crash and retreat, I saw a jellyfish turning over and being torn apart by the waves and the rocks, these little rocks which by some mysterious centrifugal action are left in the waves right where they crash. I could see in her dome many tears filled with sand that seemed suspended there in the viscosity of her composition, and this creature would have no defense because of this viscose composition of hers—and all theirs—which makes them about the same as the water around them, but unfortunately a body of their own, and a body it was tossing about nearly dead I saw in the shallow of the shallows.

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How jellyfish move is by a slow series of contractions of their bodies—a denser water, as it were, contracting within the saline ocean—but this motion, this vehicular action that allows them to navigate their environs, does no good

in the water where it breaks in waves on the sand, no good in the vast tides of the Northumberland Strait. Do I feel like the jellyfish? Is this something I want to venture I feel like? I don't know why it is I am drawn to these animals as they struggle, but I always want to help, and so when I am forced to kill a horsefly I even then feel bad, despite the vigor with which I try to kill them because they annoy me endlessly. Despite this vigor, I do feel bad because I love all life, and all life confuses me. I have no idea of my place in it, and it is as though I can never stop thinking for a moment—thinking the most pointless thoughts—which separate me from my surroundings, but only slightly, for I imagine that within those very surroundings is a thought, a single big thought moving along at its own pace—the reason for all of this—and for some oddity of creation I am separated from that thought by virtue of having my own.

Although I only venture this now, and do not know what I think in those moments when I am not writing, I, very much like the jellyfish, am separate from my surroundings by a thin difference, a difference of viscosity of thought, and I almost have no defense against the tossing waves in the shallows, almost no defense against the rocks over which I am tossed, these rocks being none other than the events of my life.

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Today the white rain falls in shivering sheets that obscure and blanch the sandbars. The bars retain on their surface the falling water, and up in her tower Coco sits. I visited her and gave her a bowl of vegetables picked from my parents' garden, then we spoke of the water, going swimming in it, and my grandfather's multiple sclerosis, which allowed him to go swimming every day without feeling the cold, and how Coco, when she saw this, said to herself,

“If an old man with MS can do it, then so can I.”

And so she did, only for Doctor Murray to tell her that a man with MS can't feel the water, but she could. This difference meaning that she had measured the activity of swimming every day by the wrong yardstick. If he could feel his legs, like Coco could hers, then they would be on the same footing. The disease led to complications which took his life when I was sixteen, twelve years ago now.

I wonder if my grandfather floated without feeling, and growing lost in those waves, came to be okay with not feeling—being taken away by greater

forces, swept off, the lulling of motion, *amor fati*, and then sleepy okay-ness.

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I dreamed the most beautiful dream last night. It was of a young man, and he felt so real—this cliché, *real but in a dream*, though worn through, is absolutely true in this case, and so sad was I by the resignation of that dream realm to the next (though we never resign them, they are somewhere in there, I pray) that I still feel the ache of its loss, and the beauty of its warmth. But on to the boy: he was younger than me and shorter, he was from an Islamic family. He was quiet and beautiful and dressed very modestly—and what’s more, he was perfect for me. How can I ever describe this? It would be like trying to describe myself. I cannot do it to a T but I fear that unless I do he will never be known to anyone except me.

We met in the high school of my adolescence, and in a hallway near the back, where the lights were off, he sat atop a stack of tables whose legs were folded beneath them. I stood in front of him, between his legs, and he wrapped me in the arms of his red hooded. The love was instant but not ecstatic, it was not explosive; it had no energy to waste, was not young and wasteful—but old and modest. We just knew, both of us right away, in that moment, that we’d found someone who brought us peace, who could help us accept and even love the lost years wandering, *amor fati*.

So you can see the ruin I must feel when considering the prospect that never again will I see him . . . did I mention he’s quiet? He has brown bangs that fall across his forehead, and his face—my greatest loss is that I cannot remember it; when I try to describe it, first I must call it to mind, but in that moment other people’s faces substitute themselves in the vacuum his left behind when the dream came to an end. To wit there are two dimensions of dream: there is the physical, imagistic realm, and then there is the magical, emotive realm. The images are almost gone, but the emotion is still here. If I was to describe him by way of arbitrary images, in order to fill the void just for the sake of seeing a face, it would be a lie, the feeling would disappear. I know this because as soon as I picture his face and think of how to describe his eyes, the eyes of another pop into mind, and I lose him. All I have right now is the feeling of him, and there is not one loose screw in this feeling; it fills my entire being. From the tip of my toes to the top of my brain I feel like I’m floating.

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As children we watched jellyfish float under the bridge, caught as they were on the current, without power in the current, having nothing to do with the direction they took, but nonetheless getting somewhere going that direction, and there was never another place they were going. They floated under the bridge—the local kids watching from above—at such high speeds that for only a moment would we lock our eyes to this jellyfish or that, before it would be gone, leaving our eyes to cleave to the next, all of them on their own paths heading out seaward after having spent a day up the river, on whose surface reflected the green of fields and forests.

And what about the currents out there, the deeper currents those jellyfish get caught in? I remember once I rode out there over the deeps in a catamaran with a couple of friends, and we saw gathered in a stream—a stream caused by the outflowing of the river—thousands upon thousands of red northern jellyfish and their see-through moon jelly cousins, who made up the whole of the current, it seemed, and we could see them moving onward in the direction the river pushed them, while they were contained en masse to either side by the cold depths of the ocean. The current was purely jellyfish and so it was purely purple and white and glassy, made up of these ovate forms. Overhead the sun shone down on the trampoline of the catamaran—that was a day to remember. Thump went the rudders; the boat suddenly went slow as we passed over the current of jellyfish, and so we had to pull the rudders, though not before slashing several of their bodies in two—but as we all knew, when a jellyfish is cut in two, it grows into two jellyfish.

