

LISTen

A RESOURCE FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS & COMPANIONS

SEPTEMBER 2026 VOLUME 20
ISSUE 3



The Companion is Already Within

by Rev. SeiFu Singh-Molares

The little voice within tells us there is an innate wisdom already at work in us. Some part of us is primed and prepared, and knows True North. We have an inner guide who can answer more than we think. But that guide is often lonely and uncertain, and looking for validation. That is why, in matters of the spirit, we keep looking outside.

And for good reason. The inner compass does not point first toward ease. It leads us to cliffs, difficulties, the harsh gateways the world actually offers, as the way toward what we most long for. We protest: that cannot be right. We should be meeting good things, easy flows, peace and joy; the province of serenity, not of hardship. And those things are real. But so are their opposites. So what is the right mix?

Not happiness versus suffering. Here and there. Relative and Eternal. All at once instead.

When someone begins to leave this particular life form, the proportions change. What was ninety percent "here" and ten percent "there" slowly reverses. They are still in the room, and already not. Inner and outer intermingle. They may still appear to take part in conversation, and yet they are already listening to the Beyond. Lost, in the ordinary sense; and also arriving.

We see versions of this when the people we love most transition. It is then that companions are most needed. We may find ourselves with a young priest, newly practicing. She asks whether we are ready to receive a blessing, then hesitates, because the question has two answers: communion with the Eternal, and communion with the relative world. Both present, both incomplete. The living proportion is closer to ninety percent Eternal and ten percent Relative; not

the reverse. Rituals hold us. Forms are not optional. But the current is larger than the cup.

Most of us live in that same split long before our own transitions. One foot in, one foot out. Present to the day's demands and already leaning toward what is coming. Apart, and not a part. Caring fiercely and, in the same breath, refusing to grasp. Some of us bypass, check out, disconnect, hoping to sidestep pain. But bypassing does not work. In trying to go around the wound, we run straight into it. That is how avoidance usually pays us back.

There are times when we must push the river. Banks collapse. Debris dams the channel. Then effort is not ego; it is love doing its work. More often, the deeper practice is the opposite: stand still, breathe, yield, stop striving. Can we maintain? More precisely: can we receive? There is, eventually, nothing to do. Just be. Let ourselves be carried rather than fight the water.

External companions can be central. But our inner one keeps a kind of company no one else can: the exact weight of our fatigue, and the rhythm of our hope. So that alone no longer means lonely. And we can give ourselves permission. And room. The Universe has a way of rising to meet an honest step. Resting easy. Resting in grace. Resting in faith.

We forget this and go looking for others to do what only we can. We are already our own best spiritual companions, for ourselves, and, when the moment asks, for one another. The work is to remember, to get out of our own way, and then to flow with the Eternal. Or, when the river needs it, to push, without losing the ninety percent that was never ours to manage.





"Let ourselves be carried,
rather than fight the water!"

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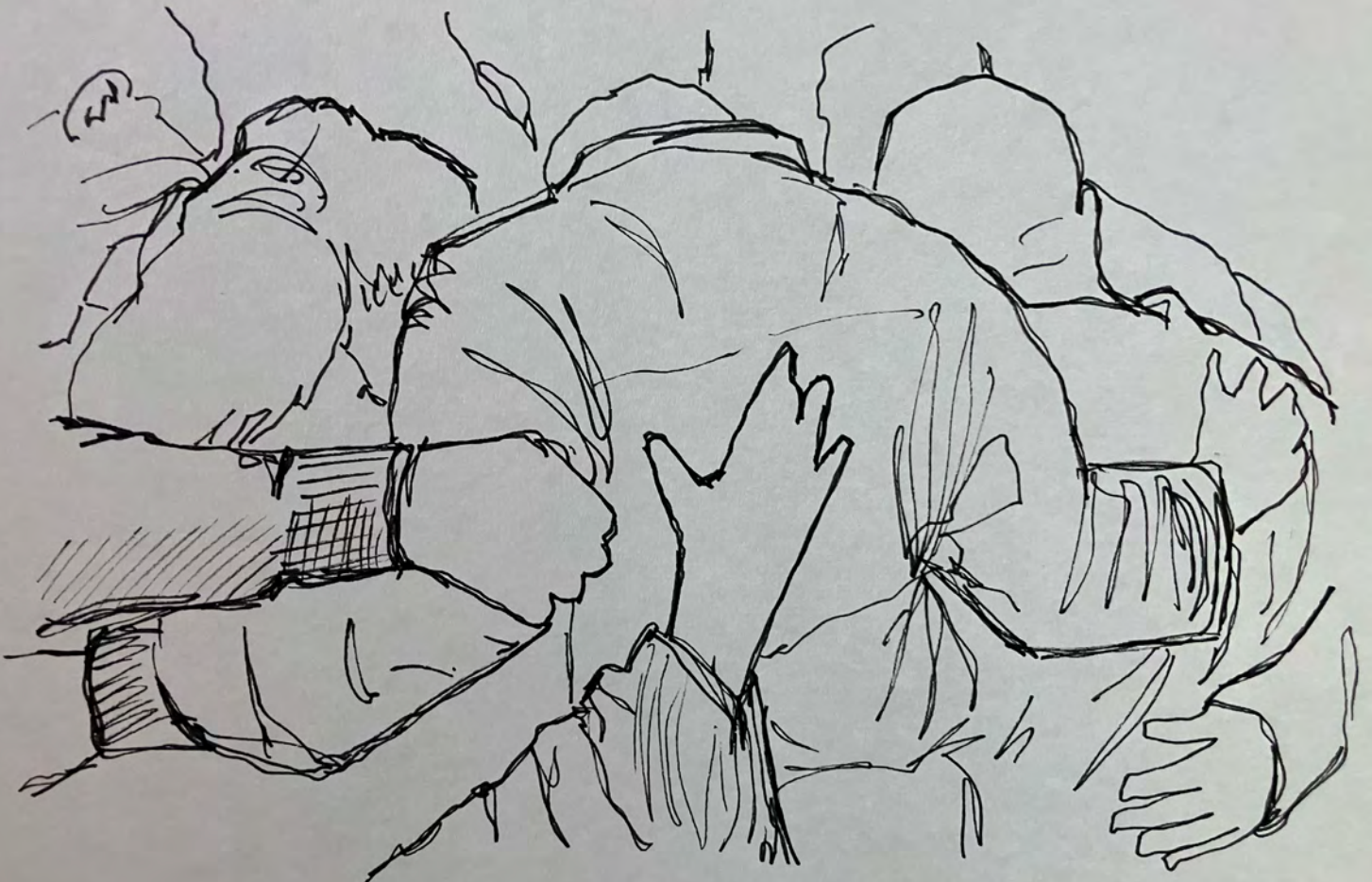
YOU ARE PRECIOUS TO GRIEF

by Karen G. Johnston

You are Precious to Grief
When our beloveds die,
there are so many goodbyes.
Some say, too many.
Some say, not enough.
Some say, what am I to do
with this absence?
Some say, what am I to do
with this presence, still here,
just no longer body.
Some close their eyes.
I say: open wide.
Choose each goodbye,
no matter how painful.
There is something precious
on the other side.

There is something precious
within.
Trust.
Even if
there is no reason.
Even if your life has taught you
there is every reason
not to.
Trust.
Trust
that grief
is an oyster
and you are
its pearl.

Rev. Karen G. Johnston (she/her), ordained into the Unitarian Universalist ministry in 2016, currently serves as Senior Minister at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington in Vermont. Trained as a death doula, she is the author of the curriculum, *Date with Death Club* (datewithdeathclub.com).



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PUBLISHER: Spiritual Directors International

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND EDITOR:

Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares, MTS

PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR: Matt Whitney

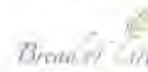
SUBMISSIONS: listen@sdiworld.org

ADVERTISING: ads@sdiworld.org

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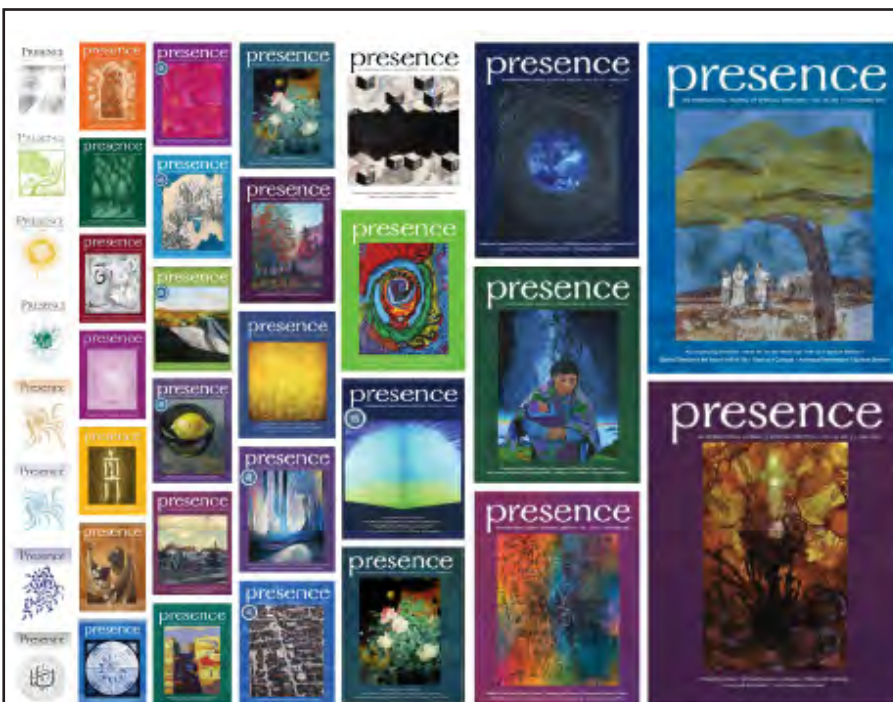
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The thief left it behind:
the moon at my window.

(Ryōkan)





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