

Oh, what a tangled web

When I was four years old I rushed into my mum's bedroom late one night crying and saying, "Mummy we're all going to die, we're all going to die!"

I remember this very distinctly and feel that I have been attempting to come to terms with my own mortality in some way or another ever since. First of all there was the panic and the asthma attacks. I am not sure if I got scared and then had asthma attacks or whether I just got scared because I thought I could die having the asthma attack, probably a bit of both.

Then there was the experience of running into my grandmother, who was crippled with arthritis, seeing her wince with the pain, and desperately from then on wanting to make her better, wanting to make old age better even, to turn back the clocks. There was always something a bit desperate inside. There was a lot of nail biting and a comfort blanket. There was reading and going to another world in my imagination. Then there was my father's dark classical music.

As a teenager there was the sense of religion as something meant to help people lead a moral life; I didn't think that you really needed to believe in anything, just that belief might help. As I grew older the believing became more and more difficult but I didn't think that really mattered. I would sit in church and just stare through the stained-glass windows, feel inspired and not really listen or think very much.

There was, there was and there was...

Then there was romance and all of a sudden love was going to last forever, wasn't it? Oh, what an incredibly tangled web we weave when ourselves we do deceive! The anxiety just went deeper into the dreams and I was trapped into living a bit of a lie even although I did really love. In fact I loved a lot. I wanted to make everyone better and suffered a lot which didn't really help anybody.

Then there was the Dhamma seeping on in slowly through the pain, unseen, kind of. Life felt very real, not just an act. The more real it felt the more real the love was. But it was all me, very me because I knew nothing more. I might have known something higher deep inside but it was not something more until the samādhi at age thirty-eight. Thank the Lord for that.

Now, after many years of spiritual practice and study I feel like I am returning to this same kind of silence that I experienced in the church all those years ago. The only difference is that I know what I need to never want to leave the church.

I offer this for your reflection.

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