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In 1330 or so, **Heinrich Suso** had an encounter with an apparition of the Free Spirit:

Whence have you come? (Suso asked)

I come from nowhere.

What are you?

I am not.

What do you wish?

I do not wish.

What is your name?

I am called Nameless Wildness.

Where does your insight lead to?

Into untrammelled freedom.

What is that?

When a man lives according to all his caprices, without distinguishing between God and himself, and without looking before and after.

Sounds pretty rock'n'roll to me. *When you're coming down the base of a mountain, you're on fire. Your heart is exploding. Endorphins are busting out in your brain, and you don't want to just prove that you can do it but discover what you're made out of.*

From a 14th-century apparition to a big-wave surfer of the 21st (a mountain is a wall of water in surfing parlance) is a big jump. (Actually, it isn't for a free spirit, for someone who's on fire.) So let's keep going. Nothing is foreign to love. It takes whatever blocks or thwarts it – the mundane, the damaged, the shitty – and includes them in itself. Not only are we riding down the mountain but this mountain is chasing us. Abundance, which draws us to it, tends towards distortion, the monstrous, even. Out of this comes sickness and death. The very first and the very last are joined.

Life is born outside reason. I am not your facts. Why not? Because the facts are never the end of the story. It is always possible to reveal what is by means of what is not – something that leaves the world that has been set up for us way behind. So let's say it again. The hit throws us into the drama – that which puts things (and us) in their place and gives them life. Then we have to be true to it. How to do that? By entering the world that the hit reveals.

It is the loving who are the daring. No matter that at times they are morbidly astray and ferociously odd. They find faults, gaps and knots in the flow of life – raptures, seizures, moments of estrangement – all of them signs of being called, signs of transcendence. But then comes love's fall, that involuntary descent, ringing with the underworld. Nothing is constant. No strategy will work. And where do we find ourselves? In a space beyond the world of narrated occurrence – a door to deliverance.

Grandad, said my four-year-old grandson in the car one day on the way down to Devon, *when they're after Batman and he jumps to another level, they can't get him, can they?* All salvation is based on this principle.

Whether it's simple ecstasy, obliterating rapture or withdrawal to the core, doesn't matter. The world contains order and departures from it – improvisation and silence. Our normal, waking, rational consciousness is not the only one:

all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there are potential forms of consciousness entirely different...No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.

The frontiers between these states – which are worlds – exist everywhere. Visions, confabulations and fictions overlap like sounds: all of them simultaneously present in the same 'space'. But we can call them forth – by passion, by truth. These are qualities – virtues – that can take us. 'This is what I must do. These are my people.'

And yes, we find ourselves in a multitude of sins. Fanaticism and delusion are just the

beginning, followed quickly by a helter-skelter of the many-coloured; the intricate, embroidered and inlaid; the changeful, subtle and ambiguous. We're caught up in desire and service, infinitely suggestible and infinitely exploitable, the holy mixture of gravity and grace.

When the attention is caught, we're trapped; when the imagination is caught, we're free. *I think they saw me as something like a deliverer, a way out*, **Little Richard** said once. But this can take us into strange places. **John Donne**, writing in the 17th century, compared the church to a prostitute: *she is most trew and pleasing to Thee when she is embrac'd and open to most men*. And:

for I,

*Except you'enthrall me,
Never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except
You ravish me.*

What is this enthrallment, this ravishment? To receive into ourselves all the embodied presences of creation, and to pass on the glory. Then our life becomes less of a collection of facts and more of a love affair. We all have another world in us, one that is quickened by the motion of a hidden fire. And it's purifying. Why? Because there's nothing else.

**What we find is
that something
always gets away.
Loss and freedom
are transpositions
of each other.**