

POEMS  
TO SAVE  
YOUR  
LIFE

YOU WERE  
NEVER  
BROKEN

JEFF FOSTER

 **sounds true**  
BOULDER, COLORADO

# CONTENTS

Everything is Welcome

2

Part One: A Field of Meditation

8

Part Two: Saying Yes to the Mess

62

Part Three: The Courage to Stand Alone

114

Part Four: Reasons to Stay Alive

166

## PART ONE

### A FIELD OF MEDITATION

**H**ere's what meditation really is: touching life exactly where life is touching you.

When we meditate, we aren't trying to change or manipulate our experience. We aren't trying to access some higher or transcendent state, zone out of our humanity, or become some spiritually enlightened guru. We aren't trying to silence the mind, destroy the ego, free ourselves from difficult feelings, or even "feel better." We aren't even trying to relax, calm down, or be at peace, however odd that sounds to the goal- and future-focused mind.

Simply begin by embracing the part of you that doesn't want to embrace, be embraced, or even begin. You can always begin there. I have begun thousands of meditations with the part of me that doesn't want to meditate. It is such an old friend. I love it dearly.

So, begin. Now. Simply feel your feet on the ground. Notice the mysterious alive sensations there, without trying to alter or understand them. Notice the location of your hands right now as they hold this book, their position, their weight, the way the fingers are curling, their heat, their aliveness. What does it feel

like to hold a book? Imagine it was your first time ever holding a book. Notice the way your face feels as you read this. Does your face feel tense or relaxed? Is your forehead creased? Your jaw slightly tense? What is the expression on your face as you read these words? Is there a smile or a frown on your lips? Is there a pressure or contraction in your shoulders? Notice the weight and density of your body. How it gently sinks into the chair or sofa you're sitting on. How it feels to wear the clothes you are wearing, where they touch your shoulders, your hips, your legs, their bulk and weight and texture. What it feels like to be alive, right now. What it feels like to be . . . *you*. Uniquely, unrepeatably you, having the experience you're having, on this very ordinary day of your life. This day has never come before, and it will never come again. Will you greet it with your curiosity? Will you bless it with your attention?

Even if you notice a sense of struggle in yourself, there's no need to *struggle against the struggle* either. Struggling against struggle only creates more struggle. Instead, bless even the struggle, allow even the struggle, for it too is life, and deserves to be here in our meditation together.

Instead of going to war with this moment and trying to push it away or make it better, more comfortable, more exciting, more spiritual, or more whole, can you open your heart and your awareness and *receive* it as it is, discomfort and mess and stickiness and all? True meditation just means *being awake and alive to this precious moment*. It means attention without a goal. This is the kind of meditation the Buddha taught.

Consider that you are exactly where you need to be right now. Anxious, depressed, empty, happy, fed up, frustrated, lost, numb, spaced-out, angry, or just feeling far from life . . . Paradoxically, you are exactly where you are supposed to be, supported and held by forces mysterious and ancient and unnameable.

**AND  
YOU  
NEED  
NO  
PROOF**



Slow down. Take the day one breath at a time.  
You stand on sacred ground, always.

For it is your last day.  
And your first day.

You are dying, today. So live!



Get curious. Allow yourself to not know what's coming  
in the *next* moment.

Invite attention into *this* unique moment.

What is it like, to be here?

To see?

To taste?

To smell?

To feel? To not feel?

To be alive,

on this day of all days?

Laugh at the voices in your head.  
(They are not who you really are.)

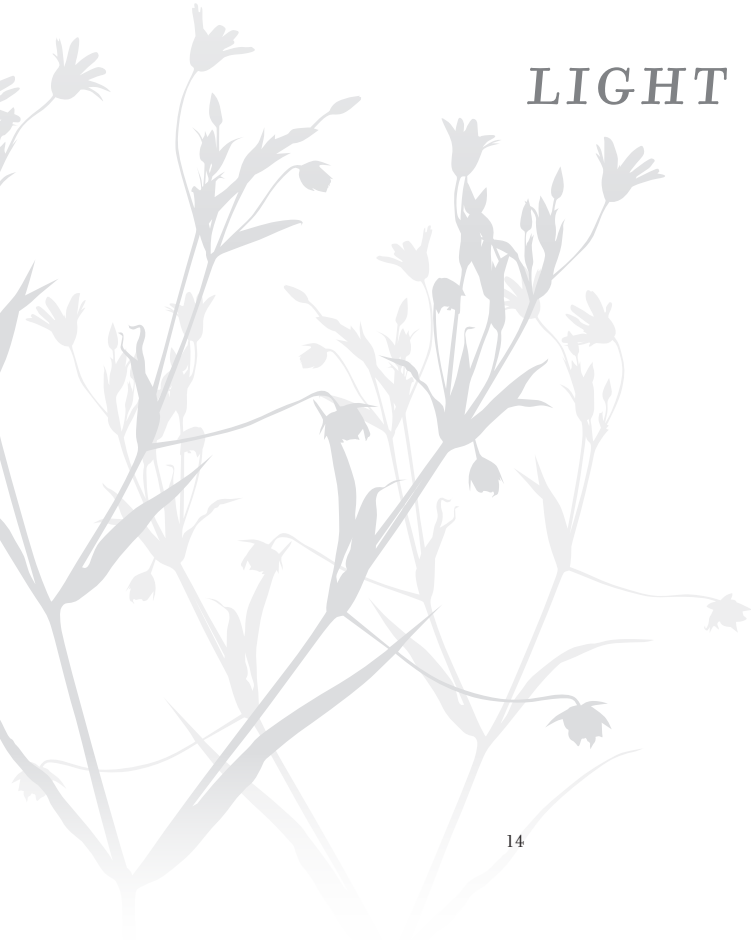
You are powerful.  
You are worthy.

You belong.

And you need no proof.



THE  
SHADOWS  
AND  
THE  
LIGHT



Wanting to live,  
and wanting to die.

Wanting to break into newness,  
and wanting to hide.

Wanting to connect,  
and wanting to be alone.

Wanting to want,  
and wanting to be free from want.



Child, you hold *all* of this sacredness  
in your vast and beautiful heart.

Never turn away from any part, my love.  
Yet never let any part be your master.

Live right in the middle.  
Be free and wild in the middle  
like the trees in the forest:

Reach out for the light, yes,  
but love your shadows too.