

# A reflection in liquid pearl

Peter Reason delights in the ephemeral beauty of dewdrops

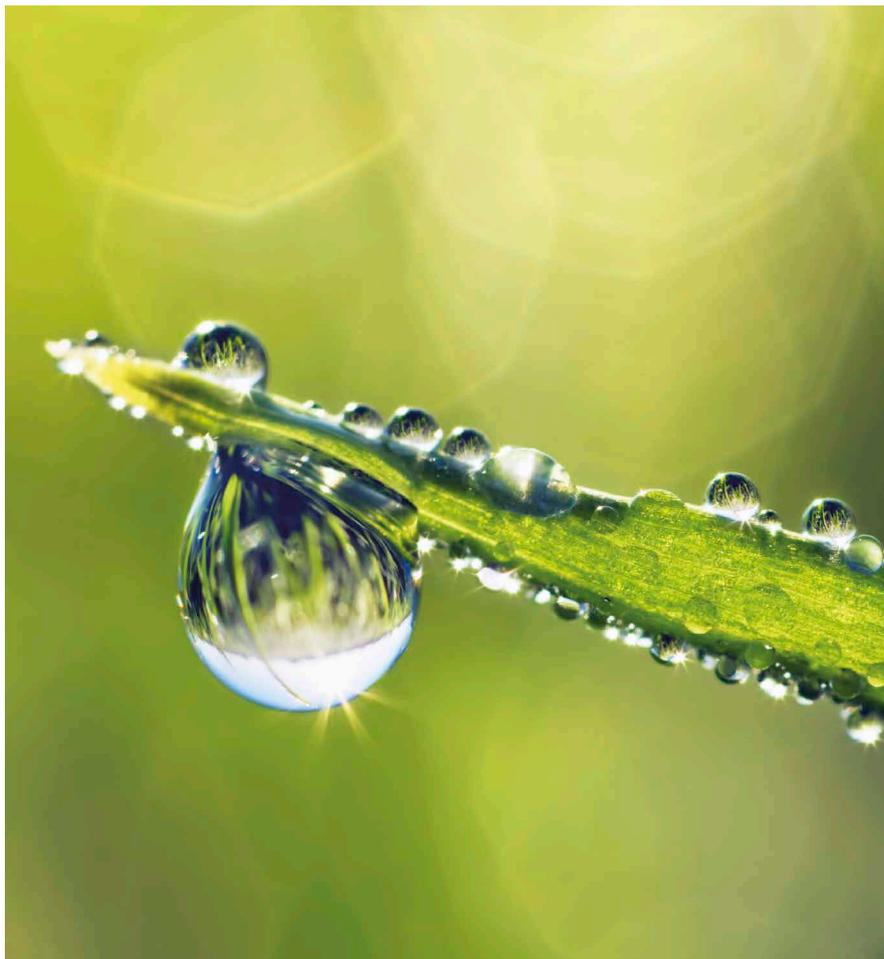
A misty mid winter morning. A faint but pungent smell fills the damp air – a hint of wood smoke, a dash of diesel fumes, low notes of rotting leaves. The black tarmac, wet with overnight rain, shines darkly. Up the lane, the view disappears into a veil of moisture; a pigeon takes flight, its wings flapping muted with damp.

In the orchard all is still. Drops of moisture hang from the fruiting spurs, each suspended precariously between gravity and its own coherence, each a luminous glow that cuts through the diffuse mistiness of the morning. To say that they are like jewels would be both clichéd and inaccurate, for no jewel could possess their startling liquid clarity. On the Reverend Wilks, on the Winter Gem, on the Victoria plum, a dozen or more shimmer like stars in the gloom.

Two blue tits land on the rambling rose that climbs the high stone wall. Their sharp twittering cuts through the silence of the morning. As if on cue, the resident jackdaws strike up a conversation, batting sharp cries to and fro. A pigeon joins in with its monotonous moan. Then all falls silent again.

Every dewdrop is different, each one such a consummate shape – a sphere drawn out horizontally and vertically by the force of its weight and by the shape of the twig it hangs from. Each a perfect line of beauty, as close to a Platonic form as we have here on Earth. Gradually, they'll evaporate as the sun warms the day, or become unstable and fall to the ground.

A closer look shows that each drop reflects an upside-down world with crystal clarity: tiny, yet exquisitely perfect, a kind of miniaturised kaleidoscope. As I move around, different aspects of the orchard come into



"No jewel could possess their startling liquid clarity"

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view: now the sky; now a jagged line of branches; now the grass. Beyond the range of human sight this reflected world continues, smaller and smaller, infinitesimal, limited only by the wavelength of light and the size of the water molecules.

One of the drops has gone! It was particularly full and elongated along the curve of the twig. Silently, it has dropped to the ground, absorbed in the wider world of moisture. Its absence is almost palpable.

The blue tits are calling again. The remaining dewdrops reflect light all around the orchard. Even in this misty morning there are always points of luminous clarity, if you know where to look.

In just half an hour, the mist has lifted. The view down the lane is now almost clear. **R**

Peter Reason is a writer and teacher. His book *In Search of Grace: An Ecological Pilgrimage* is published by Earth Books.