

# A Natural Consequence of Things

*by* Randal Houle

I'm standing in the rain. Rather, I'm standing with about a hundred other people in the rain. Precisely, I'm standing in the middle of the parking lot, letting large tepid globules of springtime rainwater douse my hair and shoulders and soak through the layers of my clothes and run down my arms and drip from my shriveled hands while a hundred other people crowd themselves into groups based on gender, work comraderie, and preference. Random is a figment, like saying the rain randomly falls on one spot and not another. It falls where it falls, which is to say it falls by design, led to its target by wind, gravity, and whether our building had been responding to a bomb threat.

That's why I'm standing here in the rain. Because of the bomb threat we had to vacate the building and stand in the parking lot. More precisely, we were told to vacate by my boss and we stood and crowded to the stairwell and filed outside to the parking lot to watch and see if the rumor was true and some of us were disappointed that our effort went unvalidated and others were leary of returning to the workspace. Belief is a hammer, like saying the mind is a piece of iron. The hammer can form, which is to say the mind can be reformed, but not without a lot of effort.

I'm not standing in the rain anymore. Furthermore, I don't care that the others drown in their fear. More precisely, the threat was never real and they rarely are although I appreciate the cautious attitude and now everyone follows and chatters about how frightening the episode was and how we all could have died, even though we didn't and the balance of the day will be spent reliving their peril. Repetition is like drops of rain, like saying you can't live through something without reliving it over and over again. The

drops soak you, which is to say reinforcement is a natural consequence of things

