

The Word
- Tony Hoagland

Down near the bottom
of the crossed-out list
of things you have to do today,
between "green thread"
and "broccoli," you find
that you have penciled "sunlight."
Resting on the page, the word
is beautiful. It touches you
as if you had a friend
and sunlight were a present
he had sent from someplace distant
as this morning- to cheer you up,
and to remind you that,
among your duties, pleasure
is a thing
that also needs accomplishing.
Do you remember?
that time and light are kinds
of love, and love
is no less practical
than a coffee grinder
or a sage spare tire?
Tomorrow you may be utterly
without a clue,
but today you get a telegram
from the heart in exile,
proclaiming that the kingdom
still exists,
the king and queen alive,
still speaking to their children,
-to any one among them
who can find the time
to sit out in the sun and listen.

Awareness
- John Astin

Awareness –
her gaze is so constant,
our every move
watched
with such affection,

a ceaseless vigil
without condition
or agenda,
silent,
patient,
unrelenting in her
embrace.

There is endless room in
the heart of this lover,
infinite space for whatever
foolishness we may
toss her way.

But she is also
crafty, this one –
a thief who will steal away
everything we ever cherished,
all our beliefs,
all our ideas,
all our philosophies,
until nothing is left
but her shimmering
wakefulness,
this simple love
for what is.

From Out of the Cave - Joyce Sutphen

When you have been
at war with yourself
for so many years that
you have forgotten why,
when you have been driving
for hours and only
gradually begin to realize
that you have lost the way,
when you have cut
hastily into the fabric,
when you have signed
papers in distraction,
when it has been centuries
since you watched the sun set
or the rain fall, and the clouds,
drifting overhead, pass as flat
as anything on a postcard;

when, in the midst of these
everyday nightmares, you
understand that you could
wake up,
you could turn
and go back
to the last thing you
remember doing
with your whole heart:
that passionate kiss,
the brilliant drop of love
rolling along the tongue of a green leaf,
then you wake,
you stumble from your cave,
blinking in the sun,
naming every shadow
as it slips.

Just For Me
- Anna Villalobos

What if a poem were just for me?
What if I were audience enough because I am,
Because this person here is alive, is flesh,
Is conscious, has feelings, counts?
What if this one person mattered not just for what
She can do in the world
But because she is part of the world
And has a soft and tender heart?
What if that heart mattered,
if kindness to this one mattered?
What if she were not distinct from all others,
But instead connected to others in her sense of being distinct, of being alone,
Of being uniquely isolated, the one piece removed from the picture—
All the while vulnerable under, deep under, the layers of sedimentary defense.

Oh let me hide
Let me be ultimately great,
Ultimately shy,
Remove me, then I don't have to...
be...

But I am.
Through all the antics of distinctness from others, or not-really-there-ness, I remain
No matter what my disguise—

Genius, idiot, gloriousness, scum—
Underneath, it's still just me, still here,
Still warm and breathing and human
With another chance simply to say hi, and recognize my tenderness
And be just a little bit kind to this one as well,
Because she counts, too.

Compassion
- Miller Williams

Have compassion for everyone you meet, even if they don't want it.
What appears bad manners,
an ill temper or cynicism is always a sign of things
no ears have heard, no eyes have seen.
You do not know what wars are going on
down there where the spirit meets the bone.

Taking bold poetic license, the same poem can be reinterpreted as a self-compassion poem by inserting the following italicized words - Kristin Neff

Have compassion for yourself, even if you don't want it.
What appears bad manners,
an ill temper or cynicism may be a sign of things
your ears could no longer hear,
your eyes have since overlooked
You may not know what wars are going on
down there where the spirit meets the bone.

I Am Not I
- Juan Ramon Jimenez
Translated by Robert Bly

I am not I.
I am this one
walking beside me whom I do not see,
whom at times I manage to visit,
and whom at other times I forget;
who remains calm and silent while I talk,
and forgives, gently, when I hate,
who walks where I am not,
who will remain standing when I die.

The Guest House **- Rumi**

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Myself and My Person **- Anna Swir (Swirscynska)**

There are moments
when I feel more clearly than ever
that I am in the company
of my own person.
This comforts and reassures me,
this heartens me,
just as my tridimensional body
is heartened by my own authentic shadow.

There are moments
when I really feel more clearly than ever
that I am in the company of my own person.

I stop
at a street corner to turn left

and I wonder what would happen
if my own person walked to the right.

Until now that has not happened
but it does not settle the question.

Love after Love
- Derek Walcott

The time will come
When, with elation,
You will greet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror
And each will smile at the other's welcome

And say sit here. Eat
You will love again the stranger who was yourself
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you
All your life, whom you have ignored for another
Who knows you by heart
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf
The photographs, the desperate notes,
Peel your own image from the mirror
Sit. Feast on your life

The Journey
- Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice--
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers

at the very foundations,.....
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do--
determined to save
the only life you could save.

Start Close In
- David Whyte

Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.
Start with
the ground
you know,
the pale ground
beneath your feet,
your own
way of starting
the conversation.
Start with your own
question,
give up on other
people's questions,

don't let them
smother something
simple.
To find
another's voice,
follow
your own voice,
wait until
that voice
becomes a
private ear
listening
to another.
Start right now
take a small step
you can call your own
don't follow
someone else's
heroics, be humble
and focused,

start close in,
don't mistake
that other
for your own.
Start close in,
don't take
the second step

or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.

Belonging **- John O'Donohue**

May you listen to your longing to be free.
May the frames of your belonging be generous enough for your dreams.
May you arise each day with a voice of blessing whispering in your heart.
May you find a harmony between your soul and your life.
May the sanctuary of your soul never be haunted.
May you know the eternal longing that lives at the heart of time.
May there be kindness in your gaze when you look within
May you never place walls between the light and yourself.
May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you,

The Way It Is **- William Stafford**

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

Saint Francis and the Sow **- Galway Kinnell**

The bud
stands for all things,
even for those things that don't flower,
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;
though sometimes it is necessary

to re-teach a thing its loveliness,
to put a hand on its brow
of the flower
and retell it in words and in touch
it is lovely
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing;
as Saint Francis
put his hand on the creased forehead
of the sow, and told her in words and in touch
blessings of earth on the sow, and the sow
began remembering all down her thick length,
from the earthen snout all the way
through the fodder and slops to the spiritual curl of the tail,
from the hard spininess spiked out from the spine
down through the great broken heart
to the sheer blue milken dreaminess spurting and shuddering
from the fourteen teats into the fourteen mouths sucking and
blowing beneath them:
the long, perfect, loveliness of sow.

Mark Nepo

We waste so much energy trying to cover up who we are when beneath every attitude is the want to be loved, and beneath every anger is a wound to be healed and beneath every sadness is the fear that there will not be enough time. Our challenge each day is not to get dressed to face the world but to unglove ourselves so that the doorknob feels cold and the car handle feels wet and the kiss goodbye feels like the lips of another being, soft and unrepeatable.

One Morning - Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

One morning
we will wake up
and forget to build
that wall we've been building,
the one between us
the one we've been building
for years, perhaps
out of some sense
of right and boundary,
perhaps out of habit.

and let our empty hands
hang empty at our sides.
Perhaps they will rise,
as empty things
sometimes do
when blown
by the wind.
Perhaps they simply
will not remember
how to grasp, how to rage.

One morning
we will wake up

We will wake up
that morning

and we will have
misplaced all our theories
about why and how
and who did what
to whom, we will have mislaid
all our timelines
of when and plans of what
and we will not scramble
to write the plans and theories anew.

On that morning,
not much else

will have changed.
Whatever is blooming
will still be in bloom.
Whatever is wilting
will wilt. There will be fields
to plow and trains
to load and children
to feed and work to do.
And in every moment,
in every action, we will
feel the urge to say thank you,
we will follow the urge to bow.

With That Moon Language - Hafiz

Admit something:
Everyone you see, you say to them, "Love me."
Of course you do not do this out loud, otherwise someone would call the cops.
Still, though, think about this, this great pull in us to connect.
Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye
that is always saying,
with that sweet moon language,
what every other eye in this world is dying to hear?

Unconditional - Jennifer Welwood

Willing to experience aloneness,
I discover connection everywhere;
Turning to face my fear,
I meet the warrior who lives within;
Opening to my loss,
I gain the embrace of the universe;
Surrendering into emptiness,
I find fullness without end.
Each condition I flee from pursues me,
Each condition I welcome transforms me
And becomes itself transformed
Into its radiant jewel-like essence.
I bow to the one who has made it so,
Who has crafted this Master Game.
To play it is purest delight;
To honor its form--true devotion.

Allow
- Danna Faulds

There is no controlling life.
Try corralling a lightning bolt,
containing a tornado. Dam a
stream and it will create a new
channel. Resist, and the tide
safety lies in letting it all in –
the wild and the weak; fear,
fantasies, failures and success.
When loss rips off the doors of
the heart, or sadness veils your
becomes simply bearing the truth.
In the choice to let go of your
known way of being, the whole
world is revealed to your new eyes.

The Velveteen Rabbit

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

"I suppose you are real?" said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive.

But the Skin Horse only smiled.

Walking the Walk
- Rumi

Keep walking, though there's no place to get to.
Don't try to see through the distances.
That's not for human beings.
Move within, but don't move the way fear makes you move.
Today, like every other day, we wake up empty & frightened.
Don't open the door to the study and begin reading.
Take down a musical instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

Invitation
- Mary Oliver

Oh do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy
and very important day
for the goldfinches
that have gathered
in a field of thistles
for a musical battle,
to see who can sing
the highest note,
or the lowest,
or the most expressive of mirth,
or the most tender?
Their strong, blunt beaks
drink the air
as they strive
melodiously
not for your sake
and not for mine
and not for the sake of winning
but for sheer delight and gratitude—
believe us, they say,
it is a serious thing
just to be alive
on this fresh morning
in the broken world.
I beg of you,
do not walk by
without pausing
to attend to this
rather ridiculous performance.

It could mean something.
It could mean everything.
It could be what Rilke meant, when he wrote:
You must change your life.

The Quiet Power **- Tara Sophia Mohr**

I walked backwards, against time and that's where I caught the moon singing at me.
I stepped downwards, into my seat and that's where I caught freedom waiting for me
like a lilac.

I ended thought, and I ended story.

I stopped designing, and arguing, and sculpting a happy life.

I didn't die. I didn't turn to dust.

Instead I chopped vegetables, and made a calm lake in me
where the water was clear and sourced and still.

And when the ones I loved came to it, I had something to give them, and
it offered them a soft road out of pain.

I became beloved.

And I came to know that this was it. The quiet power.

I could give something mighty, lasting, that stopped the wheel of chaos,

by tending to the river inside, keeping the water rich and deep, keeping a bench for you
to visit.

The Rhythm **- Tara Sophia Mohr**

In any creative feat

(by which I mean your work, your art, your life) there will be downtimes.

Or so it seems.

Just as the earth is busy before the harvest and a baby grows before its birth,
there is no silence in you.

There is no time of nothingness.

during the quiet times,

when the idea flow is hushed and hard to find you trusted (and yes I mean trusted)
that the well was filling, the waters moving?

What if you trusted

that for the rest of eternity,

without prodding, without self-discipline,

without getting over being yourself,

you would be gifted every ounce of productivity you need? What would leave you? What

And what if during the quiet times you ate great meals and leaned back to smile at the
stars,

and saw them there, as they always are,

nourishing you?

There are seasons and harvest is only a fraction of one of them.

There is the rhythm that made everything.

the next time a moment of silence catches you there, hear it, that rhythm, and let it place a stone in your spine. Let it bring you some place beautiful.