

1/24

Begin Again

by Jeannette Encinias

<http://www.jeannetteencinias.com/my-poetry>

Begin Again. Little moments. Running the water. Tending to the plants. Cutting the fruit. Opening the curtains so that the entire sky can greet you. It's never easy but, no matter. Steam from the tea so quiet. An open book, and door, and arms.

You woke up today. You are alive. This is a gift. Even though life may beat you down. Hard. Even though things, situations, and people you love may be taken away from you so that your arms can memorize the grace of letting them go. Even then, especially then, begin again.

Remind yourself that nothing really dies, rather, it transforms. Everything and everyone you have ever loved lives in the mysterious memory of your cells. Turning. Healing. Renewing itself. Until one day, a photograph of something or someone very dear, long gone, visits your mind and you bow your head with appreciation.

Meanwhile, take your pain to the sea and your trouble to the mountain. Leave it there and walk home clean. When failure knocks and rattles and quakes, let it. Watch it make a fresh canvas of you. Failure, that great teacher, is kinder if you thank her as you are getting up off the floor. She knows something that you don't know: that she is usually the last face you will see before breaking through. Such a little light in the crack of the door.

But today, if you are wading through the waters of loss or confusion: begin again. Open the avocado. Draw the bath. Call a friend. Gather the books. Play your favorite album. Write. Create art. Open your arms. Move your legs. Lovely, little blessings. Whispering to life that you won't give up.

Not ever.
Not ever.
Not ever.

1/29

Celebrating our sacred moments and growing stories...

Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass...
it's about learning to dance in the rain.
- Vivian Greene

He looked at his own SOUL with a telescope
What seemed all irregular, he saw
and showed to be beautiful constellations
and he added to the consciousness
hidden worlds within worlds.
- Coleridge

The way we live
opens windows
and calls in a
secret voice to anything
still missing.
- Hafiz

2/18

The path isn't a straight line;
it's a spiral.
You continually come back to the things
you thought you understood and
see deeper truths.
- Jaylene Moreau

There is a lovely idea in the Celtic tradition that if you send out goodness from yourself, or if you share that which is happy or good within you, it will all come back to you multiplied ten thousand times. In the kingdom of love there is no competition, there is no possessiveness or control. The more love you give away, the more love you will have.
- John O'Donohue

Knowing your own darkness is
the best method for dealing with the
darkness of other people.
One does not become enlightened by
imagining figures of light, but by
making the darkness conscious.
The most terrifying thing is to
accept oneself completely.
Your visions will become clear only when
you can look into your own heart.
Who looks outside, dreams;
who looks inside, awakens.
- Carl Jung

Beatitudes for the Weird

Blessed are the weird people
- poets, misfits, writers, mystics -
for they teach us to see the world through different eyes

Blessed are those who embrace the intensity of life's pain and pleasure,
for they shall be rewarded with uncommon ecstasy.

Blessed are ye who see beauty in ugliness,
for you shall transform our vision of how the world might be.

Blessed are the bold and whimsical,
for their imagination shatters ancient boundaries of fear for us all.

Blessed are those who have endured breaking by life,
for they are the cracks through which the light shines.

- Jacob Nordby

"My mom taught us to never look away from people's pain.
The lesson was simple:

Don't look away. Don't look down.
Don't pretend not to see hurt.
Look people in the eye.
Even when their pain is overwhelming.

And, when you're in pain,
find the people who can look you in the eye.
We need to know we're not alone - especially when we're hurting.
This lesson is one of the greatest gifts of my life."

- Brene Brown

3/17

Dear sacred laborers of compassionate hospice care,

This seems like the...

Time for awakening

to come to ourselves,

Time for deeper healing,

to change our directions for renewal,

for all of us through this "labor pain"...

Kei

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When this is over,
may we never again
take for granted

A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theatre
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends,
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way--better
for each other
because of the worst.

- Laura Kelly Fanucci

And the people stayed home.
And read books, and listened,
and rested, and exercised,
and made art, and played games,
and learned new ways of being,
and were still.

And listened more deeply.
Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.
Some met their shadows.
And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed.

And, in the absence of people
living in ignorant, dangerous,
mindless, and heartless ways,
the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed,
and the people joined together again,
they grieved their losses,

and made new choices,
and dreamed new images,
and created new ways to live
and heal the earth fully,
as they had been healed.

- Kitty O'Meara

Message from the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers

"As you move through these changing times... be easy on yourself and be easy on one another. You are at the beginning of something new. You are learning a new way of being. You will find that you are working less in the yang modes that you are used to. You will stop working so hard at getting from point A to point B the way you have in the past, but instead, will spend more time experiencing yourself in the whole, and your place in it. Instead of traveling to a goal out there, you will voyage deeper into yourself. Your mother's grandmother knew how to do this. Your ancestors from long ago knew how to do this. They knew the power of the feminine principle... and because you carry their DNA in your body, this wisdom and this way of being is within you. Call on it. Call it up. Invite your ancestors in. As the yang based habits and the decaying institutions on our planet begin to crumble, look up. A breeze is stirring. Feel the sun on your wings."

<http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org/>

3/23

In a time of distance

The unexpected always happens in the way
The unexpected has always occurred:
While we are doing something else,
While we are thinking of altogether
Different things – matters that events
Then show to be every bit as unimportant
As our human concerns so often are;
And then, with the unexpected upon us,
We look at one another with a sort of surprise;
How could things possibly turn out this way

When we are so competent, so pleased
With the elaborate systems we've created –
Networks and satellites, intelligent machines,
Pills for every eventuality – except this one?

And so we turn again to face one another
And discover those things
We had almost forgotten,

But that, mercifully, are still there:
Love and friendship, not just for those
To whom we are closest, but also for those
Whom we do not know and of whom
Perhaps we have in the past been frightened;
The words brother and sister, powerful still,
Are brought out, dusted down,
Found to be still capable of expressing
What we feel for others, that precise concern;
Joined together in adversity

We discover things we had put aside:
Old board games with obscure rules,
Books we had been meaning to read,
Letters we had intended to write,
Things we had thought we might say
But for which we never found the time;
And from these discoveries of self, of time,
There comes a new realization
That we have been in too much of hurry,
That we have misused our fragile world,
That we have forgotten the claims of others

Who have been left behind;
We find that out in our seclusion,
In our silence; we commit ourselves afresh,
We look for a few bars of song
That we used to sing together,
A long time ago; we give what we can,
We wait, knowing that when this is over
A lot of us – not all perhaps – but most,
Will be slightly different people,
And our world, though diminished,
Will be much bigger, its beauty revealed afresh.

- Alexander McCall Smith

3/26

For One who is Exhausted, A Blessing
by John O'Donohue

When the rhythm of the heart becomes hectic,
Time takes on the strain until it breaks;
Then all the unattended stress falls in
On the mind like an endless, increasing weight.

The light in the mind becomes dim.
Things you could take in your stride before
Now become laborsome events of will.

Weariness invades your spirit.
Gravity begins falling inside you,
Dragging down every bone.

The tide you never valued has gone out.
And you are marooned on unsure ground.
Something within you has closed down;
And you cannot push yourself back to life.

You have been forced to enter empty time.
The desire that drove you has relinquished.
There is nothing else to do now but rest
And patiently learn to receive the self
You have forsaken in the race of days.

At first your thinking will darken
And sadness take over like listless weather.
The flow of unwept tears will frighten you.

You have traveled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come to take you back.

Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain
When it falls slow and free.

Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to open the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.
Learn to linger around someone of ease
Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

History will remember when the world stopped
and the flights stayed on the ground.
And the cars parked in the street.
And the trains didn't run.

History will remember when the schools closed
and the children stayed indoors
and the medical staff walked towards the fire,
and they didn't run.

History will remember when the people sang
on their balconies, in isolation
but so very much together
in courage and song.

History will remember when the people fought
for their old and their weak,
Protected the vulnerable
by doing nothing at all.

History will remember when the virus left
and the houses opened
and the people came out
and hugged and kissed
and started again

Kinder than before.

- *Donna Ashworth*

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We have embarked on a long voyage
through a massive uncharted water
away from our familiar land

We are together on this boat
as little as a spec in the stormy sea,
as big as our heart can reach out and expand
Rocked by the mischievous waves hit our nerves
and shaken by the icy splashes of fear and fright
that may strengthen our now invisible connection
felt closer beyond or because of the physical distance

We have started our learning
to use an unfamiliar loom
weaving and showing
our unseen hues of emotion
bringing the best and worst of us

oscillating between awakening and fear
between *thank you* and *I'm sorry*

Finding and cutting off what is not necessary
learning the new steps born out of missteps
dancing together, sharing
our contracting labor process
in our sighs of amazement and wonder
Life's strides one step at a time

We are watching
our footage on our new heritage
finding new roots on this rocky boat leaving
a long streak of our voyage on the open sea
through each wave we overcome
like a center thread to hold us together
till we reach a new land to till
with our eyes
wide open.

- Kei

4/9

Grandma once gave me a tip

During difficult times,
you move forward in small steps.

Do what you have to do,
but little by bit.
Don't think about the future,
not even what might happen tomorrow.

Wash the dishes. Take off the dust. Write a letter. Make some soup.

Do you see? You are moving forward step by step.

Take a step and stop. Get some rest. Compliment yourself. Take another step. Then another one.

You won't notice,
but your steps will grow
bigger and bigger.

And time will come
when you can think about the future without crying.

Good morning.

(Elena Mikhalkova, "The Room of Ancient Keys")

I lived in the first century of world wars

by Muriel Rukeyser

I lived in the first century of world wars.
Most mornings I would be more or less insane,
The newspapers would arrive with their careless stories,
The news would pour out of various devices
Interrupted by attempts to sell products to the unseen.

I would call my friends on other devices;
They would be more or less mad for similar reasons.
Slowly I would get to pen and paper,
Make my poems for others unseen and unborn.
In the day I would be reminded of those men and women,
Brave, setting up signals across vast distances,
Considering a nameless way of living, of almost unimagined values.

As the lights darkened, as the lights of night brightened,
We would try to imagine them, try to find each other,
To construct peace, to make love, to reconcile
Waking with sleeping, ourselves with each other,
Ourselves with ourselves. We would try by any means
To reach the limits of ourselves, to reach beyond ourselves,
To let go that means, to wake.

Meditations on the Way of Sorrows

Cast out of our little gardens of eden
"What did I eat?"

Led out of our little egypt of bondage,
"What am I missing?"

Exiled to the unfamiliar waters of babylon,
"Where is our home?"

Our heart is crashed open to see
only more people like us
"Where is your home?"

Born out of this foreign land is the voice
reaching out beyond the sea and wilderness,
"What are you missing? How can I serve you?"

We are learning this new land
to harvest new stories to nourish our journey
"What stories can we eat and live today?"

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Your coffee cup, the stove, the table,
the light from the window, the wind

Your presence in the light
the breaths of your breathing, the pace

the breath, the presence, the movement, the moment,
the light from within us

Awakening us and our loved ones inside
drying dead the venomous dust outside.

Kei

4/12

Praying ~ Mary Oliver from, Thirst

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and silence in which
another voice may speak.

4/17

*"for any spirit suddenly awakened
to how deep its life
how short its stay"* - Mark Nepo

Kindness

by Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.

What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.

How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

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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.

- Rumi

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Leaving Early

by Leanne O'Sullivan

from 'a poem in gratitude for health care workers'

tonight Fionnuala is your nurse.
You'll hear her voice sing-song around the ward
Lifting a wing at the shore of your darkness.
I heard that, in another life, she too journeyed
through a storm, a kind of curse, with the ocean
rising darkly around her, fierce with cold,
and no resting place, only the frozen
rocks that tore her feet, the light on her shoulders.

And no cure there but to wait it out.
If, while I'm gone, your fever comes down –
if the small, salt-laden shapes of her song
appear to you as a first glimmer of earth-light,
follow the sweet, hopeful voice of that landing.
She will keep you safe beneath her wing.

4/24

Lockdown: Hope for Humanity

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many
years of noise
You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighborhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are
slowing down and reflecting
All over the world people are
looking at their neighbors in a new way

All over the world people are waking up
to a new reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.

To love.

So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul.
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to
how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again.
The sky is clearing.
Spring is coming.
And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square.
Sing.

by Fr. Richard Hendrick, OFM
March 13, 2020