



Spiritual Poetry Meetup

Poems to take home with you

July 16, 2023

What Do Poems Do? – Brian Doyle

Today Is Sunday – Nazim Hikmet

Brilliant Sky – Jean Joubert

Last Night as I Was Sleeping – Antonio Machado
(with a quote from Vincent Van Gogh)

Such Singing in the Wild Branches – Mary Oliver

Khwaja Abdallah – The Sign of Finding Love's Well

Susanna – Anne Porter



To join the Spiritual Poetry Meetup Group, go to

<https://www.meetup.com/Spiritual-Poetry-Meetup-International/>

For more Take-Home Poetry Packs, assorted poems, and the Intrinsic Heart blog, go to

<https://intrinsicheart.com>



What Do Poems Do?

by Brian Doyle

I was, no kidding, a visiting writer in a kindergarten recently,
And the children asked me many wry and hilarious questions,
Among them, is that your real nose? and can you write a book
About a ruffed grouse, please? But the one that pops back into
My mind this morning was what do poems do? Answers: swirl
Leaves along sidewalks suddenly when there is no wind. Open
Recalcitrant jars of honey. Be huckleberries in earliest January,
When berries are only a shivering idea on a bush. Be your dad
For a moment again, tall and amused and smelling like Sunday.
Be the awful wheeze of a kid with the flu. Remind you of what
You didn't ever forget but only mislaid or misfiled. Be badgers,
Meteor showers, falcons, prayers, sneers, mayors, confessionals.
They are built to slide into you sideways. You have poetry slots
Where your gills used to be, when you lived inside your mother.
If you hold a poem right you can go back there. Find the handle.
Take a skitter of words and speak gently to them, and you'll see.

from *How the Light Gets In*, a collection of Doyle's luminous "poems."



Last night as I was sleeping I dreamt a marvelous vision
that there was a spring breaking out in my heart.
I said, "Along what secret aqueduct are you coming to me
Oh water, water of a new life that I have never drunk."

Last night as I was sleeping I dreamt a marvelous vision
that there was a beehive here in my heart.
And the golden bees were making white combs
and sweet honey from my old failures.

Last night as I was sleeping I dreamt a marvelous vision
that there was a fiery sun here in my heart.
It was fiery because it gave warmth as if from a hearth
And it was sun because it gave light and brought tears to my eyes.

Last night as I was sleeping I dreamt a marvelous vision
that there was God here in my heart.

God, is my soul asleep?
Have those beehives who labor by night stopped, and
the water wheel of thought, is it dry?
The cup's empty, wheeling out carrying only shadows?
No! My soul is not asleep! My soul is not asleep!
It neither sleeps nor dreams, but watches, its clear eyes open,
far off things, and listens, and listens
at the shores of the great silence.
It listens at the shores of the great silence.

~ Antonio Machado ~
from *The Winged Energy of Delight*,
translation by Robert Bly with added translation
art by Van Gogh

A Quote from Van Gogh:

"In spite of everything I shall rise again: I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing."

Such Singing in the Wild Branches – Mary Oliver

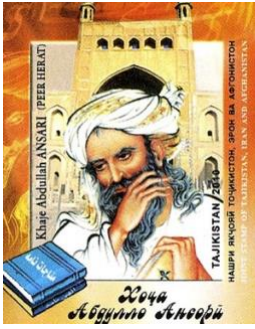
*It was spring
and finally I heard him
among the first leaves –
then I saw him clutching the limb
in an island of shade
with his red-brown feathers
all trim and neat for the new year.
First, I stood still
and thought of nothing.
Then I began to listen.
Then I was filled with gladness –
and that's when it happened,
when I seemed to float,
to be, myself, a wing or a tree –
and I began to understand
what the bird was saying,
and the sands in the glass
stopped
for a pure white moment
while gravity sprinkled upward
like rain, rising,
and in fact*



*it became difficult to tell just what it was that was singing –
it was the thrush for sure, but it seemed
not a single thrush, but himself, and all his brothers,
and also the trees around them,
as well as the gliding, long-tailed clouds
in the perfectly blue sky – all, all of them
were singing.
And, of course, yes, so it seemed,
so was I.
Such soft and solemn and perfect music doesn't last
for more than a few moments.
It's one of those magical places wise people
like to talk about.
One of the things they say about it, that is true,
is that, once you've been there,
you're there forever.*

*Listen, everyone has a chance.
Is it spring, is it morning?
Are there trees near you,
and does your own soul need comforting?*

*Quick, then – open the door and fly on your heavy feet; the song
may already be drifting away.*



Khwaja Abdallah said,

*The sign of finding love's well is contentment,
that which increases love's water is faithfulness.
The substance of love's treasure is light,
the fruit of love's tree is joy.
If you fail to separate yourself from the two worlds
you are excused from love,
If you seek recompense from the Friend,
you are ungrateful.
Love is love for God,
the rest is all idle fancy.
'Whom He loves and who love Him' is a great work,
a marvelous bazaar – it lifted up water and clay.
Thereby God became love's kiblah
and the target of union's arrows.
How could the traveler not be delighted
that love is the nearest house to the Lord?
love is a tree that produces only joy's fruit,
an earth that grows nothing but intimacy's flowers,
a cloud that rains nothing but light,
a wine whose potion is nothing but honey,
a road whose earth is nothing but musk and ambergris.
Love was written in eternity without beginning,
Love's brand lasts till eternity without end
From the time when love for the Friend became my habit and character
all of me comes from the Friend, and the Friend comes from my all.
Behold how long love's fortune lasts!
Hear how beautiful is the tale of lovers!
Love's playing field is as wide as the heart,
paradise is one branch of the tree of love.
Those who drink love's wine are promised the vision,
whoever is sincere will reach the goal.*





Susanna

by Anne Porter

Nobody in the hospital
Could tell the age
Of the old woman who
Was called Susanna

I knew she spoke some English
And that she was an immigrant
Out of a little country
Trampled by armies

Because she had no visitors
I would stop by to see her
But she was always sleeping

All I could do
Was to get out her comb
And carefully untangle
The tangles in her hair

One day I was beside her
When she woke up
Opening small dark eyes
Of a surprising clearness

She looked at me and said
You want to know the truth?
I answered Yes

She said it's something that
My mother told me

There's not a single inch
Of our whole body
That the Lord does not love

She then went back to sleep.

From *Living Things*, by Anne Porter.
Anne Porter's first book was published when Anne was 83,
and it became a finalist for a National Book Award.