



Spiritual Poetry Meetup
Poems to take home with you
November 17, 2024

Unison Benediction – May Sarton

In the Cleaving – Jan Richardson

Once More My Deeper Life Goes On – Rainer Maria Rilke

Stars – Hannah Senesh

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Invitation – Mary Oliver

Stars in Your Bones - Alla Renée Bozarth

All Four Seasons Have the Moon - Zen Master Ryokan

(This poem has footnotes, but its meaning can be understood without them.)



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>



Unison Benediction

**Return to the most human,
nothing less will nourish the torn spirit,
the bewildered heart,
the angry mind:
and from the ultimate duress,
pierced with the breath of anguish,
speak of love.**

**Return, return to the deep sources,
nothing less will teach the stiff hands a new way to serve,
to carve into our lives the forms of tenderness
and still that ancient necessary pain preserve.**

**Return to the most human,
nothing less will teach the angry spirit,
the bewildered heart;
the torn mind,
to accept the whole of its duress,
and pierced with anguish...
at last, act for love.**

~ May Sarton ~

Artwork: *Untitled* by Lee Bontecou

IN THE CLEAVING

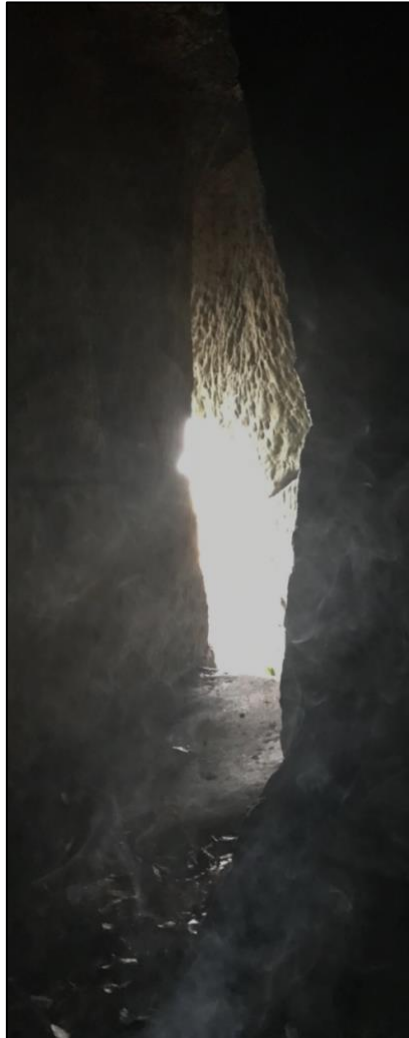
“I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.”

—Exodus 33:22

Believe me,
I know how
this blessing looks:
like it is
leaving you,
like it is
walking away
while you stand there,
feeling the press
of every sharp edge,
every jagged corner
in this fearsome hollow
that holds you.

I know how hard it is
to abide this blessing
when some part of it
remains always hidden
from view
even as it sees you
from every angle,
inhabits your
entire being,
calls you
by your name.

I know the anguish
of vision that comes
in such fragments,
the terrible wonder
of glory that arrives
only in glimpses.



So I am not here
to make excuses
for this blessing,
for how it turns
its face from us
when we need
to see it most.

But I want to believe
it will always
find its way to us
when we are in the place
made by cleaving—
the space left
by what is torn apart
even as it is joined
in the fierce union
that comes only
in the fissure.

I want to be unafraid
to turn toward
this blessing
that binds itself to us
even in the rending;
this blessing
that unhinges us
even as it
makes us whole.

—Jan Richardson

from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*. First published in [The Painted Prayerbook](#).

Photo adapted from [Riddles of the Night](#), by Steve Tanham, Rowtor Rocks Initiatory Journey



Once More My Deeper Life Goes On

Once more my deeper life goes on with more strength,
as if the banks through which it moves had widened out.
Trees and stones seem more like me each day,
and the paintings I see seem more seen into:
with my senses, as with the birds, I climb
into the windy heaven out of the oak,
and in the ponds broken off from the blue sky
my feeling sinks, as if standing on fishes.

Rainer Maria Rilke
Translation by Robert Bly
Lithograph by M.C. Escher: *Three Worlds*



Stars

*There are stars whose radiance
is visible on earth
though they have long disappeared.*

*There are people whose brilliance
continues to light the world
though they are no longer among the living.*

*These lights are particularly bright
when the night is dark.
They light the way for humanity.*

~ Hannah Senesh ~



My Heart Soars

The beauty of the trees,
the softness of the air,
the fragrance of the grass,
speaks to me.

The summit of the mountain,
the thunder of the sky,
the rhythm of the sea,
speaks to me.

The faintness of the stars,
the freshness of the morning,
the dew drop on the flower,
speaks to me.

The strength of fire,
the taste of salmon,
the trail of the sun,
and the life that never goes away,
They speak to me.

And my heart soars.

- Chief Dan George

Invitation

by 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.





Stars in Your Bones ~ Belonging

The small plot of ground
on which you were born
cannot be expected
to stay forever the same.

Earth changes,
and home becomes
different places.

You took flesh from clay
but the clay did not come
from just one place.

To feel alive,
important and safe,
know your own
waters and hills,
but know more.

You have stars
in your bones
and oceans
in blood.

You have opposing
terrain in each eye.

You belong to the land
and sky of your first cry—
you belong to infinity.

~ Alla Renée Bozarth ~



All four seasons have the moon,
and yet we admire it especially in autumn.
The mountain is high and the water clear.
In the sky of myriad miles, a round mirror flies.
Forgetting both light and object—who is this?
Heaven is high and high; autumn is chill and chill.
Holding the treasure stick, I circle the belly of the mountain.
All directions are solitary and serene.
I gaze as the moon gushes glowing light.
Who in this evening looks at it?
What does it illuminate?
How many autumns come and go?
Looking at the moon, facing the moon, there is no end.
Transmission on Vulture Peak and Caoxi's pointing—
wondrous teachings under the moon.
The night is already deep when I chant under the moon,
settling on the river while dew grows thick.
Whose pond reflects the most luminescence?
Which wanderer has the heart of fall?
Don't you see Jiangxi,
who on the night of moon gazing
recognized that Puyuan alone had passed beyond forms?
Don't you also hear
Yaoshan's famous laughter under the moon
resounding through the village from his solitary peak?
These are stories in ancient times that led seekers of the way
to look toward waxing and waning with empty minds.
Having carried much longing for the ancient,
I also face the moon, robe moistened by evening dew.

- Ryokan

From *Sky Above, Great Wind*

Translations by Kazuaki Tanahashi

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Footnotes:

—“All four seasons have the moon . . .” transmission on Vulture Peak: According to a Zen legend, in a great assembly on Vulture Peak, in the kingdom of Magadha, Shakyamuni Buddha held up a flower and blinked. Mahakashyapa smiled, and the Buddha said, “I have the treasury of the true dharma eye, the wondrous heart of nirvana. Now I entrust it to Mahakashyapa.”

—Caoxi’s pointing: Dajian Huineng (638–713), the Sixth Chinese Zen ancestor, taught at Mount Caoxi, Shao Region (Guangdong Province). As a result, he was also called Caoxi. He said, “Speaking of the Buddha entrusting dharma to Mahakashyapa is like my pointing at the moon with the whisk.”

—Jiangxi, who on the night of moon gazing recognized that Puyuan alone had passed beyond forms: Zen master Mazu Daoyi (709–788) lived in Jiangxi, China, so he was also called Jiangxi. Nanquan Puyuan (748–834), Xitang Zhizang (735–814), and Baizhang Huaihai (749–814) were his students. Once they were viewing the moon. Jiangxi asked, “What do you do on such an occasion?” Xitang said, “I make offerings to the Buddha and recite a sutra.” Baizhang said, “I practice zazen.” Nanquan flipped his sleeves and left without uttering a word. Jiangxi said, “Nanquan alone has passed beyond forms.”

—Yaoshan’s famous laughter under the moon: Zen master Yaoshan Weiyao (745–828), China, once went up a mountain, sat zazen, and did walking meditation. He burst into laughter when the moon appeared from the clouds. His voice was heard by villagers afar.

—empty minds: Freedom from attachment.