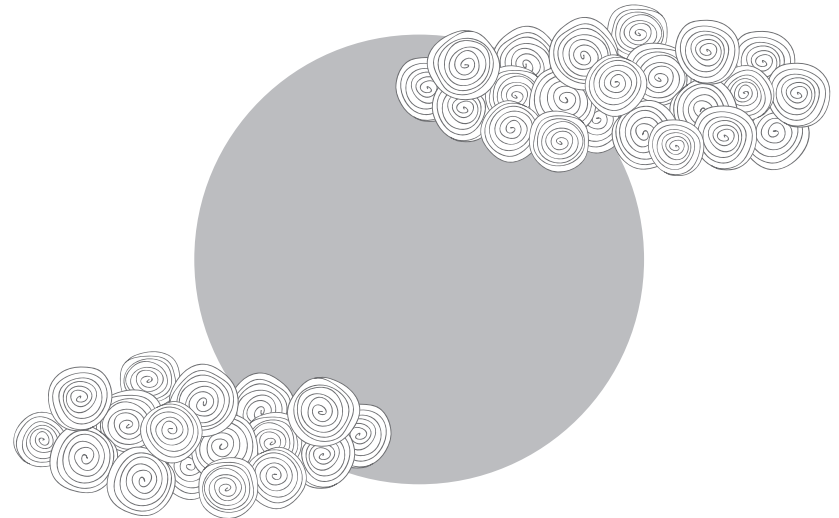


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For days when the world is too much with us ...



These are poems chosen for those days when it's all too much: when work is taking over our lives, when it's hard to get out of bed in the morning and carry on, and for when, as tired as you are, you still can't sleep:

‘... let my old friend Sleep
go his own sweet way,
listen to whoever is wide-awake in me ...’
(‘Before Dawn’ by Penelope Shuttle)

These verses are mostly to remind us to stop, even if it's for only a moment, and to remember to put things into perspective – to remind us of the essential things of life; of love, friends and family and to ‘sit out in the sun and listen.’ The beautiful poem ‘Postscript’ by Seamus Heaney reminds us that only when we take the time to stand in an in-between place, between the calm lake and the stormy sea, can we have the space to allow and welcome change and all of its possibilities.

The Peace Of Wild Things

WENDELL BERRY

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Inessential Things

BRIAN PATTEN

What do cats remember of days?
They remember the ways in from the cold,
The warmest spot, the place of food.
They remember the places of pain, their enemies,
the irritation of birds, the warm fumes of the soil,
the usefulness of dust.
They remember the creak of a bed, the sound
of their owner's footsteps,
the taste of fish, the loveliness of cream.
Cats remember what is essential of days.
Letting all other memories go as of no worth

they sleep sounder than we,
whose hearts break remembering so many
inessential things.

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?

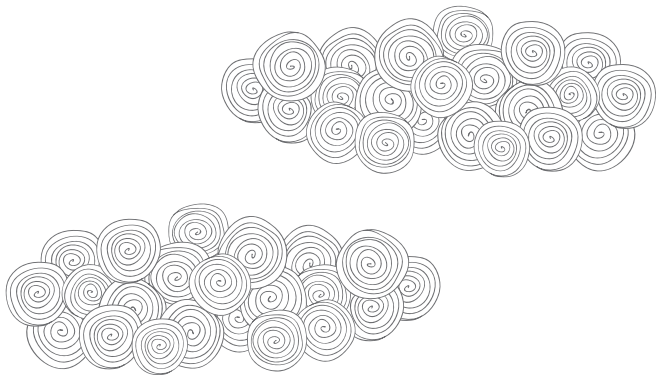
that time and light are kinds
of love, and love
is no less practical
than a coffee grinder

or a safe 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.



The Lake Isle Of Innisfree

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.
And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.
I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.