

Welcome Sorrow, and Welcome Joy



www.WordSPA.net

AskKimLangley@gmail.com

216.226.3351

Materials developed by Kim Langley, M.Ed. for WordSPA ministry

Educational purposes only. Not for reproduction.

Invocation to the Guardian

You who were with me before I was born,
dark shining on dark,
be with me now.
You who will stay with me after I die,
light traveling on light,
be with me now.

You who are nameless
in the marketplace of ten thousand things,
how shall I call you?
You who are invisible between the stars,
how shall I see you?

You who nurture me with silent wisdom,
speak to me now
I am listening beyond the sounds of night,
I am looking beyond the sights of the day.
You who fill the infinite void,
travel small on my shoulder now,
show me the way.

By Dolores Stewart, from *Doors to the Universe*. © Bellowing Ark, 2008.

Clearing

I am clearing a space
here, where the trees stand back
I am making a circle so open
the moon will fall in love
and strike these grasses with her silver
I am setting stones in the four directions
stones that have called my name
from mountaintops and riverbeds, canyons and mesas
Here I will stand with my hands empty
mind empty under the moon
And if something

Educational purposes only. Not for reproduction.

takes my life, if a sudden wind
sweeps through me, changing everything
I will not resist
I am ready for whatever comes
But I think it will be
something small, an animal
padding out from the shadows
on delicate paws, or a word
spoken so softly I hear it inside
There is a way to live that makes the angels cry out
in rapture. There is
a way to live that makes
each star a cell
Come stand with me here, it is
cold I know, and silent,
nothing is happening
The next breath, and the next, is the new life

By Morgan Farley

Twilight: After Haying

Yes, long shadows go out
from the bales; and yes, the soul
must part from the body:
what else could it do?

The men sprawl near the baler,
too tired to leave the field.
They talk and smoke,
and the tips of their cigarettes
blaze like small roses
in the night air. (It arrived
and settled among them
before they were aware.)



The moon comes
to count the bales,
and the dispossessed—
Whip-poor-will, Whip-poor-will
—sings from the dusty stubble.

These things happen ... the soul's bliss
and suffering are bound together
like the grasses ...

The last, sweet exhalations
of timothy and vetch
go out with the song of the bird;
the ravaged field
grows wet with dew.

By Jane Kenyon, from *Otherwise: New & Selected Poems*. © Graywolf
Press, 1997.

Relax

Bad things are going to happen.
Your tomatoes will grow a fungus
and your cat will get run over.
Someone will leave the bag with the ice cream
melting in the car and throw
your blue cashmere sweater in the drier.
Your husband will sleep
with a girl your daughter's age, her breasts spilling
out of her blouse. Or your wife
will remember she's a lesbian
and leave you for the woman next door. The other cat—
the one you never really liked—will contract a disease
that requires you to pry open its feverish mouth
every four hours. Your parents will die.
No matter how many vitamins you take,
how much Pilates, you'll lose your keys,
your hair and your memory. If your daughter

doesn't plug her heart
into every live socket she passes,
you'll come home to find your son has emptied
the refrigerator, dragged it to the curb,
and called the used appliance store for a pick up—drug money.
There's a Buddhist story of a woman chased by a tiger.
When she comes to a cliff, she sees a sturdy vine
and climbs half way down. But there's also a tiger below.
And two mice—one white, one black—scurry out
and begin to gnaw at the vine. At this point
she notices a wild strawberry growing from a crevice.
She looks up, down, at the mice.
Then she eats the strawberry.
So here's the view, the breeze, the pulse
in your throat. Your wallet will be stolen, you'll get fat,
slip on the bathroom tiles of a foreign hotel
and crack your hip. You'll be lonely.
Oh taste how sweet and tart
the red juice is, how the tiny seeds
crunch between your teeth.

By Ellen Bass, from *Like a Beggar*. © Copper Canyon Press, 2014.



Educational purposes only. Not for reproduction.

Way of the Dolphin

Standing in the harbor, these slick wonders slip their fins in and out of early sun. I close my eyes and remember being wheeled into surgery all those years ago; believing my job was to meet my surgeon at the surface, so the rib he had to remove would slip out, like a dolphin of bone, as soon as he would cut me.

I've learned that everything that matters goes the way of the dolphin: drifting most of the time out of view, breaking surface when we least expect it.

And our job—in finding God, in being God; in finding truth, in being truth; in finding love, in being love—is to meet the world at the surface where Spirit slips out through every cut.

By Mark Nepo, from *Reduced to Joy*. © Viva Editions, 2013.

The phoebe sits on her nest
Hour after hour,
Day after day,
Waiting for life to burst out
From under her warmth.

Can I weave a nest for silence,
Weave it of listening,
Listening,
Layer upon layer?



Photo Credit: Missouri Department of Conservation

But one must first become small,
Nothing but a presence,
Attentive as a nesting bird,
Proffering no slightest wish,
No tendril of a wish
Toward anything that might happen
Or be given,
Only the warm, faithful waiting,
Contained in one's smallness.
Beyond the question, the silence.
Before the answer, the silence.

From *Beyond the Questions* by May Sarton, in *Collected Poems: 1930-1973*.



And I Was Alive

And I was alive in the blizzard of the blossoming pear,
Myself I stood in the storm of the bird–cherry tree.
It was all leaflife and starshower, unerring, self–shattering power,
And it was all aimed at me.

What is this dire delight flowering fleeing always earth?
What is being? What is truth?

Blossoms rupture and rapture the air,
All hover and hammer,
Time intensified and time intolerable, sweetness raveling rot.
It is now. It is not.

By Osip Mandelstam, From *Stolen Air*. Translated by Christian Wiman. ©
Ecco Press, 2012.

The Work of Happiness

I thought of happiness, how it is woven
Out of the silence in the empty house each day
And how it is not sudden and it is not given
But is creation itself like the growth of a tree.
No one has seen it happen, but inside the bark
Another circle is growing in the expanding ring.
No one has heard the root go deeper in the dark,
But the tree is lifted by this inward work
And its plumes shine, and its leaves are glittering.

So happiness is woven out of the peace of hours
And strikes its roots deep in the house alone:
The old chest in the corner, cool waxed floors,
White curtains softly and continually blown
As the free air moves quietly about the room;
A shelf of books, a table, and the white-washed wall—
These are the dear familiar gods of home,
And here the work of faith can best be done,
The growing tree is green and musical

For what is happiness but growth in peace,
The timeless sense of time when furniture
Has stood a life's span in a single place,
And as the air moves, so the old dreams stir
The shining leaves of present happiness?
No one has heard thought or listened to a mind,
But where people have lived in inwardness
The air is charged with blessing and does bless;
Windows look out on mountains and the walls are kind.

By May Sarton, from *Collected Poems 1930-1993*. © W.W. Norton and Company, 1993.

Educational purposes only. Not for reproduction. Every effort has been made to use only copyright free photographs and illustrations. Free use granted for educational facilitators by Kim Langley, M.Ed., founder of WordSPA. Contact us at www.WordSPA.net and let us know how you are using the materials, contribute a favorite poem or share your experience. To bring a WordSPA retreat or workshop to your organization, call 216.226.3351 or email AskKimLangley@gmail.com.

Educational purposes only. Not for reproduction.