

Readings

When Death Comes - Mary Oliver

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
If I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,

Or full of argument.
I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

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In Blackwater Woods - Mary Oliver

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year

everything
I have ever learned

in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it
go,
to let it go.

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Wild Geese - Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

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A Thousand-Mile Walk To the Gulf - John Muir

“Let children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life, and that the grave has no victory, for it never fights. All is divine harmony.”

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John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir

“Myriads of rejoicing living creatures, daily, hourly, perhaps every moment sink into death’s arms, dust to dust, spirit to spirit-waited on, watched over, noticed only by their maker, each arriving at its own Heaven-dealt destiny. All the merry dwellers of the trees and streams, and the myriad swarms of the air, called into life by the sunbeam of a summer morning, go home through death, wings folded perhaps in the last red rays of sunset of the day they were first tried. Trees towering in the sky, braving storms of centuries, flowers turning faces to the light for a single day or hour, having enjoyed their share of life’s feast-all alike pass on and away under the law of death and love. Yet all are our brothers and they enjoy life as we do, share Heaven’s blessings with us, die and are buried in hallowed ground, come with us out of eternity and return into eternity. Our lives are rounded with a sleep.”

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May The Road Rise Up To Meet You - Traditional Gaelic Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields
and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of God's hand.

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, CEB Translation

- 1 There's a season for everything
and a time for every matter under the heavens:
- 2 a time for giving birth and a time for dying,
a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted,
- 3 a time for killing and a time for healing,
a time for tearing down and a time for building up,
- 4 a time for crying and a time for laughing,
a time for mourning and a time for dancing,
- 5 a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces,
- 6 a time for searching and a time for losing,
a time for keeping and a time for throwing away,
- 7 a time for tearing and a time for repairing,
a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking,
- 8 a time for loving and a time for hating,
a time for war and a time for peace.
- 9 What do workers gain from all their hard work? 10 I have observed the task that God has given human beings. 11 God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end.

12 I know that there's nothing better for them but to enjoy themselves and do what's good while they live. 13 Moreover, this is the gift of God: that all people should eat, drink, and enjoy the results of their hard work. 14 I know that whatever God does will last forever; it's impossible to add to it or take away from it. God has done this so that people are reverent before him. 15 Whatever happens has already happened, and whatever will happen has already happened before. And God looks after what is driven away.

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Psalms 23, CEB Translation

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd.
I lack nothing.

2 He lets me rest in grassy meadows;
he leads me to restful waters;

3 he keeps me alive.

He guides me in proper paths
for the sake of his good name.

4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no danger because you are with me.

Your rod and your staff—
they protect me.

5 You set a table for me
right in front of my enemies.

You bathe my head in oil;
my cup is so full it spills over!

6 Yes, goodness and faithful love
will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the Lord's house
as long as I live.