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## **Inspirational Stuff**

**1**

### **RELIGIOUS**

#### **Blaze of Creativity**

In a second, one iota, in the tiniest of times,  
is the space to make a gesture that surpasses reason, rhymes,  
that outpaces every meaning, each idea, concept, scheme,  
hold more power than all order and more hope than any dream—  
It's the glint of living freely in a bright, creative flare  
without borders, without worries, only hope and joy in there;  
it's the tumbling of the atoms into place where happenstance  
makes them line up into beauty as pure music, pleasure, dance—  
If the chaos of the openness and depth of space affrights,  
how will any of us find a way to light the empty nights?  
Let the effervescent madness take a sweeping arc abroad:  
in such wild, uncharted wonders, one might hear the voice of God!

#### **The Making**

Atom by atom and cell by cell,  
The seconds tick and the hours tell  
And up from nothingness and void,  
Growing, expanding, and overjoyed,  
What was mere darkness, lonely, grim,  
Swells from the silence as a hymn;  
Out of all absence, beauty came—  
Because deep love had called its name.

#### **From Darkness to Stars**

Those distant notes of smoky, sighing dusk  
That underlie and raise the early moon  
Draw mystery from earth, as if its musk  
Were growing far too fecund, far too soon,  
To lie a moment longer there in wait  
And hide the heart of what was made for strength,  
The time when reinvention is so great  
It imitates Creation, and at length,  
Renews its potent primacy and grows,  
Becomes, designs, accelerates, empow'rs  
All who would build, each being here that knows,  
The inspiration of the nighttime hours—  
So break the stars of newness in the night  
To bring from utter darkness brilliant light!

#### **Stellar**

One beautiful night,

when the stars were in such  
dazzling multitudes  
that they threatened to make  
night day,  
there was one  
new star that came  
to hover over  
the homeliest spot in existence—  
and that star,  
both because it was so new  
and because the homely place had  
no luster of its own,  
gave birth to a brilliance  
that put all the rest of the  
crowded heavens to shame  
and lent  
surpassing glory to that  
small homely place  
called Earth, so that  
the mark of its passing  
would remain forevermore

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#### **Earthen Vessel**

Who am I?  
Breath captured  
in an earthen vessel  
Spirit wedded  
to primeval soil  
Imperfect Mirror of  
essential Being  
Wrapped in the terrestrial  
winding-sheet  
of Human clay

#### **After All is Said and Done**

What will I do when at the end of time  
The story folds back on itself and calls  
On me to follow down those darkened halls  
Of memory to revisit sublime  
Past lives in fact and fiction 'til I've turned  
Empty as much as is the hourglass  
And all the strange bygones that had to pass  
Before this book called History was burned?  
What will this end extend to me, my kin,  
my life and loves and all the world abroad?  
Whether it's silence of the touch of God,  
Salvation of a sort will bathe my skin,  
And on that gleaming day I'll wake anew  
Because I loved, and I was loved by, you.

#### **Unexpected Illumination**

Whenever day's grown dark and grim  
And life, obscured behind a scrim,

Surprisingly, the welcome light  
Through colored windows seems less dim—  
Though blue and red may look less bright  
By day, and screen the moon by night,  
What rays come through and lumens pass  
These panes set inner bleakness right—  
No sorrow ends its storms, alas,  
Merely because the beams amass,  
But something blest descends on him  
Whose heart is lit by colored glass.

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### **Conservatories**

Shells of glass to shield from winter  
Leaf and flower, root and seed  
Give the tender lives inside them  
Shelter that they crave and need  
In the warming arms of friendship  
We in kind find safety, grace,  
Shelter from the world's hard trials  
In that other shielding place

### **Light Armor**

Not everything that's fierce is cause for fear,  
for strength in a good cause is great indeed,  
but not intended to make others bleed;  
rather, to shield the weak and persevere  
Against all odds, to seek the distant grail,  
to lead the way when battle's all around,  
and when it's won, to hold the conquered ground,  
protecting treasures fragile, sweet and pale;  
For guardian angels, pioneering, brave  
adventurers and stalwart friends in stress,  
must keep their fiercest watch and always dress  
full-armored, so prepared to shield and save  
Us humbler beings and what we hold dear;  
Not everything that's fierce is cause for fear!

### **Sweet is the Song**

However cold and sharp the wind may be,  
As wild and deep as darkness ever falls,  
From utmost edges of the storm still calls  
A song that stills, that draws and comforts me—  
Though battles rage, the world in sorrow drowns,  
And trials threaten life and hope and light,  
That gracious call still guides me through the night  
As long as I will listen to its sounds—  
No danger is so great, no ill so dire,  
Nor pestilence and terror so extreme,  
That it cannot be mended by the stream  
Of melody from that angelic choir—  
Now when amid the depths of dark and pain,  
I'll listen for that heavenly refrain.

### **To the Astonishment of Angels**

Where in the wilderness of life an adumbration points the way  
From our benighted place, our strife and sorrows, to the sun of day,  
A banner flares out on the breath of some great strength to give reprieve  
To wearied lung and heart, from death to lift us to where we believe  
Once more that goodness lies within, that kindness is courageous love,  
That generosity's akin to calling stars down from above  
And handing them to needy souls to light their way to higher ground,  
And that small songs pierce blazing holes in prison walls with their mere sound—  
Here in the bitter night and cold, when such a beacon lights a spark  
To guide us forward, as of old, let us rise up and leave the dark  
And carry all our fellows, too, to those bright, grand palatial places  
Where in the wilderness the true angelic joy renews its graces.

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### **Grace**

Grace is a wonderfully wide woman,  
Big and bountiful and  
Incautiously inclusive.  
She picks you up in her beautiful bronze arms  
And squeezes until all the ugly  
Falls plumb off you.  
You'll notice she smells of everything  
Homemade you ever almost died from wanting  
To eat too much of.  
She croons to you (her voice  
Is like homemade fudge, too)  
And you will swear, it  
Sounds like angels at a church picnic  
The way she says your name.  
'My child, my child,' she sings.  
Her brown, loving eyes,  
Rich as melted mahogany,  
Must not work too well anyway,  
Since she always tells you  
What a precious prize you are,  
What a tremendous talent,  
What a cartload of charisma.  
Her kiss, it's shamelessly smoochy  
And makes you blush like all-get-out  
'Cause no one could miss catching you  
At a smack like that,  
But you're secretly proud of the fact.  
When she squashes you up against that warm  
Mattress of a bosom  
And blesses you with that  
All's-forgiven-type of kiss,  
You will just roll over and hoot with happiness,  
Even though we all know  
You don't deserve it.

### **Angels & Archetypes**

We know we ought to emulate  
the kind, the grand, the merciful;

the wise, the graceful and the strong,  
though less, we should but try.  
While they transcend each inborn trait,  
we ought to be more versatile  
in seeking ways to right all wrong,  
raise anthems to the sky.

In archetypes and angels there  
are facets, patterns, images  
that can, if we attend enough,  
teach us potential good  
that we might do most anywhere,  
among the wildest savages—  
or creatures made of finest stuff—  
as much as humans could.

It's not for us to understand  
or comprehend the whole of life,  
but just to look in better hearts  
and aim to elevate  
ourselves from this, our mortal land,  
our failings and our inner strife,  
and learn that Love is where one starts  
such gifts to imitate.

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## LOOKING UPWARD

### **Road Tripping**

On Friday I will hit the road by after-office evening light,  
Hit it so hard it'll snap up and roll like it's a window shade,  
Because a Friday evening is the sort of thing a road is made  
For best—what else can put me in a frame of mind so near to right?—  
And Saturday will likely see me tearing up the countryside  
At speed, pretending I've no brakes except to let coyotes dash  
Across (or ease me through the turns so I continue not to crash,  
But rather, feel that sideways pull, the curve that makes my world so wide)—  
And Sunday I'm still flying fast, and though turned homeward, yet a streak,  
Because I must keep breathless joy searing my lungs, tearing my eyes,  
Crowning my windy hair as though I'd won the biggest ever prize,  
Since all this traveling is what will pull me through another week

### **Taking the Long View**

Some few souls are large enough to see  
Beauty on the distant horizon, no matter how  
The mundane intervenes to obscure it, darkness to  
Shut its eye and turn faces and thoughts to other things,  
No matter how long and toilsome is the road  
That straggles up to it at last...  
Why there are such magnanimous and patient  
Watching ones when all the rest of us turn tail  
And hide or just forget there is this gorgeous line  
That draws together sky and earth, I cannot say,

Only that it's so, and that I hope I can  
Be wise enough to let them point the way.

### **The World is Askew & I Like It Like That**

Laugh lines engraved at the corners of eyes  
That have seen sorrow, injustice, wrong turns  
Taken, and moments of needful kindness missed—

Such laugh lines are not crows' feet to mock  
These cosmic breaks, missteps, and mushroom clouds,  
But spin a web for catching joy  
To counterbalance all the wrong that slips  
The earth too far on this her yearning axis—

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So I'll build webs, carve lines by dancing and drumming,  
But solving riddles and telling tales, by painting,  
And by making light of particles that make  
The universe and every wrinkle in it  
So imperfect and  
So admirable.

### **Transportation**

These days, a gentle breeze is quite enough to take me down,  
to knock me senseless to the curb, to blow me out of town,  
or out of countenance, at least—but if I am astute,  
I'll let the breezes blow and take me down a different route.  
Why should I let a breath derail my happiness like wrath,  
if I can take it in my sail and find a different path?

### **Toward Light**

In shaded rows where nary a Bouquet of *alstroemeria*  
Nor even modest flora such As *primula* could flourish much,  
I smiled to see a hosta bloom, There in the greenish-dappled gloom,  
As though with neither need nor care To see a ray of sunlight there—  
And thought me how I ought to seek, When life and times seem likewise bleak,  
To flower bravely and in bright Defiance of the lack of light,  
Bring beauty to where there is none—To be, myself, a ray of sun

### **It's Time**

It's time  
to hitch up my skirts  
pick up my feet and  
run like a madwoman  
howling gleefully  
shrieking with wildness  
through the weedy grass  
through the prickly woods  
across the stinging rush  
of that icy brook  
and leap headlong  
back into full-fledged life

### **Lightening Upward**

Nothing do I covet,  
nothing lack and  
nothing seek—  
except the serendipity of Light  
that cuts the darkness open,  
transforms blackness  
to less bleak,  
and with its glinting stars sweetens the night,  
that makes my thoughts reach higher,  
afire indeed  
to reach the peak,  
enlightened now, and gladly there alight.

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### **Bedazzled**

All through this night, a sparkling sky shouts out in dazzling handmade stars  
of hopes and dreams, of glories past; what we believe makes the future ours—  
our splashy, gleaming, naive wants, our bold wild brashness, sweet with pain  
at the memory of what all this cost, this wealth of joy—this the faint refrain  
as the night grows cold and the ashes drift: that our predecessors paid with life  
to buy our present comfort, give us our privileged pleasures free from strife—  
this tinge of sorrow underlaid still cannot dim, and never mars,  
our gladness that that price was paid, so we fire our dazzling handmade stars—  
our banners raise with collective pride, with staunch salutes and our boastful hymns—  
at least until we wake up unchanged, long after the final firework dims.  
We should still remember, when dawn returns and celebratory displays will cease,  
that it's best for us to light the skies with our stars for prosperity—and peace.

### **Becoming Gypsies**

Freedom's a romantic notion we imbue with pretty joys,  
Dreamed escape from life's commotion and the race's worldly noise,  
Endless travel, music, dancing, and the heat of thrumming hearts,  
But though sweet, the dream's entrancing magic's only where it starts—  
Gypsy life is what we make it, rich as fantasy can be,  
Only when we reach and take it: yes, it's up to you and me  
To create this liberation and its joys for which we long—  
Life becomes a celebration when we fully join the song

### **Something to Contemplate**

Let us pause for a moment of thought on who we are and what we're not,  
On living life as best we can, no matter whether beast or man,  
And think of beauty, wisdom, skill, kind spirits, charm, and strength of will,  
And not forget, not for one blink, we're not as dandy as we think,  
But all the same, let's take the tack of cutting, each, ourselves some slack—  
Our imperfections won't be solved until we're all far more evolved,  
But what we are at present, still, has *bits* of charm, kind spirits, skill,  
Has strength and wisdom; beauty too—and that gives us enough to do—

### **Getting Ahead of Myself**

Around that corner just ahead is some Unknown that in my head  
Is not the terror-building fright that lends to terrors in the night  
For pessimistic glass-half-gone, despairing people, dusk to dawn,  
In nightmare hiding, room to room, expecting any moment Doom—  
In my imaginings and dreams, instead, the Unknown beckons, gleams

And twinkles like a shooting star, calling to me to roam afar  
Into ephemeral and great new joys from early hours to late,  
Adventures, newness, glamor, thrills, all dancing at my windowsills  
And hovering at door and gate just out of view—  
Oh, I can't wait!

### **Possibilities**

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I think I have a hankering for things both rich and strange  
To the degree that anything I love requires a change  
From normalcy into a state you might consider odd  
Or simply having no real weight upon the native sod  
Of humankind—that is, not kin to mortals and their sort—  
And if you find my life herein just makes you give a snort  
Of disbelief (maybe disdain), I'll not call it affront,  
But pity you the sad refrain of living such a blunt  
And circumscribed existence as mere 'normalcy' implies,  
While I, adorned in fairy dust, take to the endless skies.

### **Do or Die**

I am not brave, not big and strong, and change gives me the creeps,  
But when the moment comes along, my crawling turns to leaps,  
Because my innate sense of time and self and hope, my drive,  
My dreams and aspirations, climb and make me feel alive—  
So much so that I can't keep still, must jump right up, arise,  
And spring to action, and I will push onward to the skies,  
For all that lies ahead is unknown, hid, but what may be  
Is great and magical and fun, is grand and wild and free—  
If I don't take that daring chance and forge ahead at speed,  
How will I, short of happenstance, find anything I need,  
Or grow, improve, achieve, emerge? How can my sorrows sleep?  
I know I'd best just fight the urge to crawl, and rather, leap!

### **If Beauty Dwells Inside**

If beauty dwells inside the mortal heart  
and soul, what dark impediment can be  
so strong that we'd forget, incessantly,  
to let it rule and be the greater part?  
Have bitterness and poverty of care  
for good and kindly things the weight and sway  
to force the love of beauty out, away,  
and leave a wound of emptiness in there?  
What fault in us could any cause invent  
to trade our greatest gift for grief or hate—  
can joy revive, or is it left too late  
that we grow wiser, love, create—relent?  
Let us let go of emptiness, grow whole  
by filling it with Beauty, heart and soul.

### **Puzzler**

Here's a small conundrum, Friends:  
How is it that, if each thing ends,  
we never think of finitude

as normal—are we just too rudimentary to know that we, the most finite that things can be, are, too, surrounded by this, while we live—or is this just denial? Silly, that we fail to see our butterfly fragility as ordinary, simply clear expression that our tenure here is as ephemeral, at least, as any insect, plant, or beast, and that, despite our destined death, our lives are full, from that first breath, first movement, heartbeat, or first thought—and that is *plenty*, is it not?

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### **Phoenix in Plainclothes**

I'm not afraid, though storm clouds menace me, obscuring all the known, the safe and sweet, though lightning slashes through the dark and sleet to make its fury all that I can see—  
For under it, still in the garden's bed, lie roses, graceful guardians of peace, to shelter me until the storm should cease, and blue convolvulus, whose trumpets said—  
The rain announces plenty, growth and life, and nothing terrible amid its fires can conquer me, so strong are my desires and will, that they defeat such earthly strife—  
And I will spread my wings and rise, remade, for though storms menace me, I'm not afraid.

## **TOWARD LIGHT**

### **Necessary Songs**

Building sound from wave to wave,  
from one deep breath of yearning need  
to that next breath which dares to hope  
and sweeping back again, the pendulum  
of wish and fear, of bitterness and joy, that takes  
its great anthemic arc through night  
to day, through life on into death, we sing  
because we must, not some  
Greek chorus without tone  
but pushed beyond by passion's drive to cry  
with beauty deeper than both blood and bone

### **To Rest in Peace**

The night is long and still I cannot sleep  
For fear the dawn will steal what I would keep  
When hope and restlessness have wrestled till  
The willow near my bedroom windowsill  
Bends nearer down to say she'll weep with me,

One generation to the next, poor tree—  
The night will surely pass, and so will sorrow,  
Yes, just as death's outlasted by tomorrow,  
So let me sleep, O grief, or let me fly now,  
Over the willow tree, rise up and die now—  
For what's this aching but forewarning cold  
That what's ahead is neither dross nor gold  
Except it brings me closer by its cost  
To endless morning, healed of what I'd lost.

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### **Stillness at the Edges**

I

We stood along the shore at break of day,  
The water lapping gently at our heels,  
And heard the distant crying of the seals  
At gulls for stealing all their fish away—  
The dawn was chill and misty, palely blue,  
Our hearts in morning shadow just as cold,  
And bone and sinew feeling early old  
As soul and body waiting day will do—  
The sea was restless, slowing at the last  
To push up foam as streaky as the clouds  
And gather shells and pebbles in those shrouds  
Around our feet, we statues standing fast—  
All this, because our spirits captive are  
Until revived by sun, our morning star.

II

So lifeless, silent, still and cold are we  
When gold has yet to tinge the morning sky,  
So empty is the world but for the cry  
The seals and gulls raise up in minor key—  
So heartless is the morning chill ashore  
We stand like stone and cannot take a breath  
Until the sun releases us from death  
And brings the flame of sentience once more—  
At last the light of day draws us to wake,  
And we'll bestir ourselves to act and thrive,  
Rejoicing to discover we're alive  
Until the world's foundations start to shake—  
We know the night will come again, and fast,  
And so must live each day as if our last.

### **Morning, Waking**

Starting anew with a fresh clean slate  
I feel a sense of freedom, youth  
A breathing moment where the truth  
Is not unlikely, not too late  
I have arisen and begun  
Not just by law but for desire  
Alit with unaccustomed fire  
From some oft-hidden ray of sun  
These days when age most often stings

The simple joys right out of me  
I slake my thirst with ecstasy  
When a rare morning-welcome sings

### **Worlds of Peace**

In the sleepy little world where  
kindness can prevail and thrive  
The beasts and people live in peace,  
all happy just to be alive  
Their gracious ways, generous hearts,  
their gentle speech and thought and will  
Protect them all throughout the day,  
and through the nighttime hold them still—  
Would that this dreamy little world  
could bloom and flourish here on earth  
And that such hopeful tenderness  
pursue us all straight on from birth  
My wistful wishing is not vain;  
this virtue could embrace us all,  
For we do know how to be so,  
if only we would heed the call  
And so each morning as I rise  
I make a small and silent prayer  
That by the night's new-darkened skies,  
we'll find ourselves all living there

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### **Battlements Better Breached**

In the windows, down the rooftops, through the stonework of her walls,  
All the shadows gone at midday, softly as an echo falls,  
Whispered secrets came to haunt her, spoken like a jailer's dream  
Though the sun would flame and flourish and the loneliness extreme  
Drove her near the brink of madness, still she boarded up her heart;  
All the same, away with sadness! Every ending is the start  
Of a different adventure—little did our lady know  
That her fortress wouldn't save her, with its brave protective show,  
But when breached and doors thrown open, halls filled up with ringing song,  
She'd be rescued by companions she'd been fearful of so long.  
Hospitality and kindness, love and great companion friends  
Altogether bring salvation: joy is where this story ends.

### **Apologia**

Bleak indigo and velvet was the sky  
That hung above that cold portentous noon  
More chilling than the goddess of the moon  
If she had bowed her sorrows down to die—  
My own, I could not grief so sharp withhold  
But wept as though the torrent ought to drown  
Me in the rivers of her velvet gown  
And leave me breathless on the stones and cold—  
But blue is not my cloak, or yet my skin  
As much as dark the tenor of the day  
And when the storm had lastly passed away  
I felt the night might swallow up my sin—

Now sorrow's misery that spoke you grief  
Forgiven falls in sunset's sweet relief.

### **Boon Companions**

When shadow steals across my eyes, when chill sits in my soul, when cries  
Of hopelessness and bitter cold would turn me hard, regretful, old,  
I turn my memory to when I cradled happiness, and then  
Remember that what shaped me so was love, the kind I came to know  
From those great luminaries whose wisdom it was to seek and choose,  
From the remotest needful place, pursuit of happiness and grace,  
Who told in kindly, teaching voice that peace and joy are bought by choice,  
That when the frozen dark descends, we'll find our light  
among our friends.

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### **From Her Grave**

Arising from the heart of silent night,  
the poignant voice of one whose singular  
accomp'niment was always, only, her  
own shadow, takes the unaccustomed flight—  
Ascending, she now meets the morning sun  
and hears at last a sound she'd never heard;  
the brilliant singing of a splendid bird,  
a song that chases shadows, ev'ry one—  
And hers, along with all the shadows, flies;  
now wakened, she is free to wholly shed  
her residence in shade among the dead  
and fly up, singing gladly, to the skies—  
So freed, she dares to trust her new-fledged wing  
to raise up others from their dark to sing.

### **On Wide Wings**

By the frigid light of morning, by the pale edge of the sky,  
In the whispers of the gloaming waits a hawk that, by and by,  
Stretches up his head and perches, keen eye searching up on the lake,  
Where the echo of the church's bells call out: Awake! Awake!  
Wings sweep wide, then, of a sudden, take him soaring to the heights  
Where sunrise is turning golden, burnishing the hawk with lights  
Bright as gilt, his feathers flashing as he darts across the chill-  
Watered lake, and quickly splashing, snares a fish, and what was still,  
Silent, peaceful, secret-keeping in the dark vault of the night,  
All bursts from that quiet sleeping, with the hawk called by the light—  
Now the day is fully opened, like a daffodil in spring,  
Brought to bloom in joy and hope and shaded by the hawk's wide wing—  
As he soars and daylight blazes, my heart, too, begins to rise,  
Knows how sweet this best of days is, that would raise me to the skies.

### **NATURALLY CYCLING**

#### **Tender**

The newness of hope  
is every moment made  
slighter and tenderer and  
more delicate

by its improbability  
by its necessity  
and by  
the great  
inevitability of  
something so  
completely  
innocent  
as hope  
rising in triumph  
like a new-blown rose  
in the face of the  
harshest sun

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**Change of Seasons,  
Change of Heart**

On a stinging gusting wind,  
On wings of last fall's crackling leaves,  
On bitter thoughts and memories,  
The past holds on, but can't rescind  
Its old resentments, angers, worries,  
Or its dark grey disappointments,  
Nor be cured by any ointments  
Or oblations, but these flurries  
Of the wintry blast can flense us  
Down to bone, removing rotten  
Grudges, troubles best forgotten,  
Strip us to the core and cleanse us;  
So, stand fast while wind is wailing,  
Howling, tearing, scrubbing wildly,  
Until we emerge now, mildly  
Chastened, to a fresh unveiling

**Reawakening**

Winter now is past, forgotten swiftly as the melting snow,  
as the things that children know slip away in quilted cotton  
while they sleep: tomorrow, calling, beckons them to newer days  
and to pleasures yet a haze on the edge of nighttime's falling—  
sorrow dissipates, as ices rimming rivers melt apace  
in spring's warm return to grace the Earth with all her sweet devices  
Love, awake! The gentle keening of the season's herald bird  
is from barren branches heard, calling them to leafy greening,  
calling from the snows of death all who have lain sleeping, dormant,  
seasoned with dark winter's torment,  
to return to life  
and breath

**Defying Gravity**

Once upon a leafy glade, a pretty perch in sun and shade,  
Where callas leapt into the day from darker places and made play  
Of turning winter into spring full suddenly, the single thing  
That was most lovely in that place, that clearing full of sweetness, grace  
And peaceful calm, was that the birds alighting there, beyond all words

And dreams of nature, sat quite still and quiet, and a subtle thrill  
Of magic held the place in thrall—as if amid a concert hall  
The orchestra fell silent, yet their silver melodies still set  
The air a-qaiver, pulsing, live with such wild music as to thrive  
Beyond its moment and to sing whether the birds sat or took wing—  
The butterflies that came around this glade of gladness also found  
It fit to sit rather than fly and flit about the gleaming sky,  
And set their wings to capture sun rather than race about and run,  
Their painted beauty neatly limned as though tall ships in port had trimmed  
Their sails to rest and find surcease in this most gracious bay of peace—  
And yet, the clearing's finest gift was that no butterfly would lift  
A wing disturbing stillness there, nor bird stir up the hovering air,  
Nor even angel choose to float aloft, disturbing the remote  
And pleasant sense of such remove as was existent in that grove—  
All this to say, though all could rise and wing their way about the skies,  
Each visitor the clearing drew found on arriving that she knew  
It was a place whose joy and mirth might make her leap up from the earth,  
Yet with serenity so blessed she chose instead to lie at rest,  
By flight's exertions not be led, but letting souls fly high instead.

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### **In Return**

Willingly as daffodils stretch out of the earth  
At the first invitation of the sun,  
So I come from the dark when *my* winter ends,  
Turn my face up to the blessing sky,  
And sigh at the promise of the spearing green  
Arising by my feet, even if the icicles  
Have not yet  
Melted wholly away.

### **A Brief Meditation**

A top note of cedar breaks into my hungry lungs,  
Opens them, draws my attenuated attention,  
Like so many loose threads, together at  
A single point; in this newly narrowed  
And strengthened clarity, cedar is followed  
By saltwater, by marsh grasses and soil. The sea  
Is very near and wakes my hopes. I stand there  
On a rise at the upper tide line,  
Reeds and weeds brushing my shins,  
And breathe it all in. Slowly. Deeply. I  
Am at peace.

### **Avalanche Lilies**

Amid the muffling drifts of downy snow  
That draw the pearly winter sky down low  
To kiss the earth once more in early spring  
Are sparkling spears of palest glimmering  
Green newness, first to show upon the white  
And break the slope of frosted winter light  
Uncurling soon to show the youthful face  
Of spring's renewal in this sleeping place  
If still surrounded by the icy pale

Wild woolliness bedecking hill and vale—  
The snow, though mighty, cannot fully stanch  
The burst of springtime's sparkling avalanche

### **Here in this Emerald Land**

Because there is no sapling in the earth  
But that springs out when water wakes its seed  
And sunlight calls it up in urgent need,  
I think the rain and sun of equal worth—  
Yet all the riches of a blooming world  
No greater shine than that most humble weed  
Whose leaf invites the passing deer to feed  
Because its banners, sweetly green, unfurled—  
No flower can surpass, exotic bloom  
Outdo green's living beauty or exceed  
Its life-affirming sweetness when we heed  
The subtler potency of its perfume—  
And so I bow my head, ecstatic—sing  
The joys of every green and living thing.

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### **Farm Land**

Few things can match the beauty of  
Black soil that's newly tilled  
And redolent of things to come  
As soon as March's chilled  
Cold heart has given up his hold  
And April's warmth begun  
To set the life-renewing pulse  
Of earth under her sun.

### **Ultimatum in a Kindly Voice**

From cavernous frog-hollow bogs and willow darkened border ponds,  
from spiky sun tied down in strands of those explosive irises so wild  
that they spread right over the water as unharmed as magic fire;  
from restive ducks and cat-sprung goldfinches among the blackberry vines  
and the easement's stripling trees and soughing weeds; from these—  
from all—comes in the dawn a rustling, chuckling dance and clatter,  
and a call to come to morning, to rise up,  
come and fly: Move out! Move on!

### **Wash Over Me**

What this wild elixir, flown, delivers  
By plunging from the heights to break below,  
What icy, fearsome, awe-inspiring rivers  
Will do to quench my spirit, I don't know—  
Except I look from indigo abysses  
And faintly, I discern in blinding mist  
What splendid existential bathing this is  
That leaves me breathless, battered, cleansed and kissed—  
What sense is left when all the course has thundered  
And crashed over my head and hands and heart  
Keeps in its wake the beauty left unsundered,  
A seed to germinate and grant a start—

For nothing's as renewing as a shower:  
What pours out will remake me, hour by hour.

### **To the Woodland**

Cedar, bless me with your resinous breath,  
And oak, stretch down those knotted arms to me  
And close me in, so others cannot see  
My sorrow as I stand so near to death—  
I come here to the woodland for relief  
Among the leafy shadows of the glade,  
Hoping to leave my sadness where I've laid  
It here, a monument in shade to grief—  
Sweet birches, bend your green to veil my tears  
And weep with all the willows, as I do;  
Great trees, for graces have I come to you  
Each time that I grew mournful through the years—  
I come here to the woodland for relief  
And leave a monument, in shade, to grief.  
This mottled darkness will give way to sun  
Anon, as time flows on, and so shall I;  
The dead still sleep, no matter how I cry,  
And I must live, or my own death's begun—  
And I've much yet to live, and purpose find  
In bringing others light who, too, repine  
That have no pine-groves filled with peace like mine  
As balm and rescue for a troubled mind—  
Who know not aspens' kindly whispered care—  
Should all seek peace and comfort in the wood,  
These mercies surely better us, their good  
And healing gifts send us renewed from there—  
So we'll go to the woodland for relief  
And leave in shade, as we emerge, our grief.

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### **So Rain, Already**

Something hanging in the air, like newly laundered sheets  
Oppresses breath and dampens souls and irons out the streets;  
Humidity flows, deep and wide, 'til birds transform to fish,  
Swimming in air as thick as seas, until my fondest wish  
Is that a seam should open up the center of the sky  
And rain pour down, and I'll feel, too, so happy I could cry.

### **Under the Willow Tree**

Under the willow tree, her shade my calm,  
I see so bent by storms her trunk, how far  
The winds have twisted every limb, each scar  
Where lightning struck; yet there's a quiet psalm  
Of gratitude that whispers in her leaves  
Each time another rainfall comes to spend  
Its quenching kindness on her and to send  
New hope down deep—for anyone who grieves  
Or wonders how to pass through life's travail  
Finds shelter in her shadow—knows the limbs  
That seem to weep are only singing hymns,

Embracing in their gentle sway the frail.  
*So one fine sapling, tended with such care,  
Becomes the home for all who shelter there.*

And now her roots are deep, her branches wide  
Enough to draw more birds to them to nest,  
Assured, secure and loved, and full at rest,  
No matter what the world is like outside—  
Just as I am, beneath the willow's arm  
Of graceful comfort, grateful for her wise,  
Kind lesson to look upward to the skies  
For blessed rain, and sun to keep us warm,  
For sweet reminders of the Gardener  
Who made the willow grow, and gave her strength  
To nurture others in her shade, at length,  
Upon the graces planted there in her:

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*So one fine sapling, tended with such care,  
Becomes the home for all who shelter there.*

### **Change of Season**

Between the rain spells, when the sun is glinting onto rose and road  
The youthful smells of spring are hinting that ahead the broken code  
Winter left in seed and scion will reveal its inner life,  
Where what had appeared as dying wakes again with newness rife.  
Open eyes and open windows! Let indoors the fresh new air,  
Breathing in what melts the snows and pushes out all winter's cares.  
So renew the self and senses and embrace the growth and light  
Breaking down all old defenses, setting earth again aright.

### **River of Stars**

A river made of silver stars with sapphire deeps below,  
The sweet compassion of the heart is ceaseless in its flow—  
A font of healing, kindness, care; a waterfall of grace;  
A draught to slake the deepest thirst; and with it, keeping pace,  
Persistent hope, watered withal, along its banks to grow,  
To bloom as peace, compassion's flow'r, where starry rivers flow.

### **Year In, Year Out**

The year begins with ice and fire at dawn  
As January draws the curtain high,  
Revealing what is written on the sky  
To turn our vision forward and move on—  
Into the year ahead, awake, renewed,  
To see what can be done, what holds the key  
That everything required of you and me  
Will help fulfill the prophecy we viewed—  
Move us with hope and joy through dark and light,  
Through time that tests us as it passes by  
Until we see another evening sky  
Leading the way to that December night—  
When once again we'll come to gather here  
And mark the changing to another year.

**AND IN CONCLUSION, LET US BEGIN AGAIN...**

**Pause Button**

A miniscule moment of Zen  
Is beautiful now and again  
And a treasure, although  
It is finite, we know,  
And will end; O,  
We do not know when

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**I Wish for You...**

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May you find all the courage you need to get you through the hour, the day, a lifetime...  
May you find the wisdom to untangle whatever vexes you and revel in what you love...  
May you find companions who give you comfort, elevate you, and fill you with laughter both in the moment and through the years...  
May you find kindness embracing you, erasing your pains, and softening all sorrows...  
May you be so enriched by the beauty and goodness around you that you find you can't help but pass it along and share your gifts with others...

**Just Because...**

Just because something is beyond my understanding doesn't mean it isn't true.  
Just because it defies convention doesn't mean it Can't Be Done.  
Just because it surpasses my imagination doesn't mean it's unnatural and illogical.  
Just because it seems superhuman doesn't mean it's impossible.  
Just because I'm small and insignificant and mortal doesn't mean I shouldn't seek deeper understanding, challenge my boundaries, learn from nature, investigate logic and the natural order of things, and lean hard against the edges of impossibility...