

## Poetry on Life and Death

'I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the imagination' - John Keats

### 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 your 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.

### Death Is Nothing At All - Harry Scott-Holland

Death is nothing at all.  
It does not count.  
I have only slipped away into the next room.  
Nothing has happened.  
Everything remains exactly as it was.  
I am I, and you are you,  
and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.  
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.  
Call me by the old familiar name.  
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.  
Put no difference into your tone.  
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.  
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.  
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.  
Life means all that it ever meant.  
It is the same as it ever was.

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There is absolute and unbroken continuity.  
What is this death but a negligible accident?  
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,  
somewhere very near,  
just round the corner.  
All is well.  
Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.  
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.  
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!

### For Katrina's sun dial - Henry Van Dyke

Time is too slow for those who wait,  
Too swift for those who fear,  
Too long for those who grieve,  
Too short for those who rejoice,  
But for those who love, time is  
Eternity.

### The Guest House - Jelaluddin Rumi

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes,  
as an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honourably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice.  
Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whatever comes.  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond