



This time of year makes me want to cry out with Goethe's Faust, *Verweile dock!* (last forever!), but this is our *augenblick*, in the blink of an eye.

Monday evening, as a cold north wind pushed me along on my evening stroll, I caught sight of white blossoms shining with a luminosity that garden whites save for dusk. Snowdrops, spring's trumpet, heralding her arrival, stopped me in my rush.

Every year I think I'll know spring when she returns. But she always slips in and surprises me. The calendar and the meteorologist on the 5:30 evening news insist spring arrives on March 21. But I follow Grandma's wisdom about people and nature—"Watch what they do, not what they say." If it's in the doing, spring arrives when the snowdrops appear.

Every morning I rush into the garden to see what new delights it offers. The lush magenta of bleeding heart and peonies just breaking ground look like my heart flush with spring. My feet feel mother earth waking and stretching as the thawed garden ground gives way beneath my feet. These furred tumbles of tuft will reach tender tendrils pulling summer, that vagabond, good-time girl closer, as they heft themselves out of their tombs.

As spring progresses, waves of flowers come and go. Snowdrops and hyacinths, followed by daffodils and tulips. "Wait, wait!" I cry as spring rushes by. So slow to arrive, so quick to depart. A wayward party guest, arriving late and leaving early.

As I approach sixty, I mark spring's passing with joy and grief. Joy and sorrow coins on a scale I never get to balance into something like equanimity. This spring

marks another spring spent of my lifetime allotment. Do I spend it well?

A neighbor found her husband dead on the living room floor last week. She woke and couldn't find him, searching in all his usual early morning haunts. As the neighbors share the news, we marvel at the suddenness. "Were there signs?" we ask each other. "She never got to say goodbye," says a friend whose husband also died suddenly. "I remember looking at him as the ambulance door shut and thinking, 'I'll never see him again.'" We wonder, is it better to die quickly or with enough time to say goodbye? We reach no conclusion other than to agree we don't want to linger in suffering. We discuss this as though we have any say in the matter.

"Innocence sees that this is it, and finds it world enough," Annie Dillard writes in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. I seek an innocence, easily satisfied, content. Instead, I pant after perfection, stuck in a loop of wanting to hold this moment just a little longer and squeeze in the next moment too.

Soon the rains will wash the snowdrop petals into street gutters. Washing away, dissolving this moment, and giving birth to the next. Who can mark whether it's a beginning or an ending except in the hindsight of the ongoingness of life? While I have breath to breathe, I pray May Sarton's prayer, "Give me to do everything I do in the day with a sense of the sacredness of life." Ah, spring. How you break my heart wide open.

Today the snowdrops bloom, insisting on marking this spot when spring and death are marching on their way to somewhere and arriving in the blink of an eye. 🌸

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