

A Morning Offering

I bless the night that nourished my heart
To set the ghosts of longing free
Into the flow and figure of dream
That went to harvest from the dark
Bread for the hunger no one sees.

All that is eternal in me
Welcome the wonder of this day,
The field of brightness it creates
Offering time for each thing
To arise and illuminate.

I place on the altar of dawn:
The quiet loyalty of breath,
The tent of thought where I shelter,
Wave of desire I am shore to
And all beauty drawn to the eye.

May my mind come alive today
To the invisible geography
That invites me to new frontiers,
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,
To risk being disturbed and changed.

May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.

John O'Donohue

Fire

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs
packed in too tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water would.

So building fires
requires attention
to the spaces in between,
as much as to the wood.

When we are able to build
open spaces
in the same way
we have learned
to pile on the logs,
then we can come to see how
it is fuel, and the absence of the fuel
together, that make fire possible.

We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire
grows
simply because the space is there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to burn
can find its way.

Judy Brown

Wandering Around an Albuquerque Airport Terminal

After learning my flight was detained 4 hours,
I heard the announcement:
If anyone in the vicinity of gate 4-A understands any Arabic,
Please come to the gate immediately.

Well -- one pauses these days.
Gate 4-A was my own gate.
I went there.

An older woman in full traditional Palestinian dress,
Just like my grandma wore,
was crumpled to the floor, wailing loudly.

Help, said the flight service person. Talk to her.

What is her problem?
We told her the flight was going to be four hours late
and she did this.

I put my arm around her and spoke to her haltingly.

*Shu dow-a, shu- biduck habibti,
stani stani schway, min fadlick,
Sho bit se-wee?*

The minute she heard any words she knew –
However poorly used
She stopped crying.

She thought our flight had been cancelled entirely.
She needed to be in El Paso
for some major medical treatment the following day.
I said no, no, we're fine, you'll get there, just late

Who is picking you up? Let's call him and tell him.
We called her son and I spoke with him in English.
I told him I would stay with his mother till we got on
the plane and would ride next to her -- Southwest.

She talked to him.
Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it.

Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic
and found out of course they had ten shared friends.

Then I thought just for the heck of it why not call some

Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her.
This all took up about 2 hours.

She was laughing a lot by then.
Telling about her life.
Answering questions.

She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies --
little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts --
out of her bag --

And was offering them to all the women at the gate.

To my amazement, not a single woman declined one.
It was like a Sacrament.

The traveler from Argentina, the traveler from California,
The lovely woman from Laredo -- we were all covered with the same powdered sugar.
And smiling. There is no better cookie.

And then the airline broke out the free beverages from
huge coolers and the two little girls for our
flight -- one African American, one Mexican American --
ran around serving us all apple juice and lemonade
and they were covered with powdered sugar too.

And I noticed my new best friend --
by now we were holding hands --
had a potted plant poking out of her bag,
some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves.

Such an old country traveling tradition.
Always carry a plant.
Always stay rooted to somewhere.

And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and thought:

This is the world I want to live in. The shared world.

Not a single person in this gate -- once the crying of
confusion stopped -- has seemed apprehensive about any other person.

They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women too.

This can still happen anywhere.

Naomi Shihab Nye