

A Season's Fallow Field at Rest



I believe that when I die I shall be someone's little child again, and at my birth the aunties and the grandmothers will say, "She is an old soul." I've seen a few, just liberated from the womb, born wise, with ancient eyes like deep, pure, pristine pools alight with clarity. I shall be one of these... serene, at ease with bliss, and intimate with holiness.



Once, when I had given death permission to accept me there and then, I glimpsed that feared, benighted passageway (the very one, it's said, conveys departing souls to Heaven), and the glory it gives way to in the end; and isn't it, I wondered, isn't death just being born again?

I shall not want to go ... though the seed of what I shall become is even now astir in earth softened by the thaw: I, a pale, sturdy stem, made for a moment's innocence, drawn without volition upward by the slanting sun.

But this is only what I know, not what I hope for. Now I cling to what is near and pleases me. Experience has taught me that I shall be satisfied and peaceful, just as long as I can find you when twilight comes. Yet not I but the Almighty binds perfection, intimating more than what we know of mystical and endless love that never, ever ceases to amaze.

At dawn, the first and bravest ray, familiar as the roadside clusters of sweet clover, buttercups, and goldenrod in a Nebraska summer, can still astonish — but the spark is not the sun, and we are promised nothing less. If we only knew it, we have just begun to love, and there is time enough; someday we shall be grateful for the interruption — just a season's fallow field at rest.

Blessed indeed are they who go with certainty that they are needed elsewhere for a space; that in the vastness of the universe, there is a place in which their ministrations are required; and they are content to slip away.

When I'm no longer where you are accustomed to, regret my going if you must, but know I live, and not so far away. And I do not forget you. Will you look for me?

Look for me in commonplace and sacred spaces. Look for me in prayers and hymns and growing things... the calm vitality of a supple reed in shallow water just at evening, at the cusp of autumn.

Look for me where there are children. Set your cynical imposture aside and be astounded. Don't you know that nothing is coincidental? If you, having found me, disallow your intuition... if you walk away, I will run behind and tug your shirttail, and whine and wail till I turn blue; and you will gather courage, as if to contemplate a Gorgon, instead of loveliness too compelling to embrace for fear of losing cognizance of time and place. And there you will remain a bit, nonplussed, bemused, and ill at ease, fumbling for your pipe and flask or the equivalent; but in the end you will be satisfied, not all at once, but by degrees, that I still live just as I promised.

Summer 2006—In memory of Lydia