



Adapted from the works
of Maria Prymachenko
Designed by Sasha Deyneka

A fifth of animals without backbones could be at risk of extinction, say scientists.
—BBC Nature News

Ask me if I speak for the snail and I will tell you
I speak for the snail.
speak of underneathedness
and the welcome of mosses,
of life that springs up,
little lives that pull back and wait for a moment.

I speak for the damselfly, water skeet,
mollusk,
the caterpillar, the beetle, the spider, the ant.

I speak
from the time before spinelessness was frowned upon.

Ask me if I speak for the moon jelly. I will tell you
one thing today and another tomorrow
and I will be as consistent as anything alive
on this earth.

I move as the currents move, with the breezes.
What part of your nature drives you?
You, in your cubicle
ought to understand me. I filter and filter
and filter all day.

Ask me if I speak for the nautilus and I will be silent
as the nautilus shell on a shelf. I can be beautiful
and useless if that's all you know to ask of me.

Ask me what I know of longing and I will speak of distances
between meadows of night-blooming flowers.
I will speak
the impossible hope of the firefly.

You with the candle
burning and only one chair at your table
must understand
such wordless desire.

To say it is mindless is missing the point.

Camille T. Dungy
"Characteristics of Life"
Trophic Cascade (2017)

I stoop to pick up my footprints,
somebody seeing me might think
I'm gathering mushrooms,
healing herbs,
or flowers into a bunch,
but no —
I collect my footprints,
my traces everywhere
I walked for many years:
Here are the footprints I left while
herding sheep on the steppe.
Here, I took this path to school,
and these are my steps from my
route to work.

"I'm gathering my footprints here
so that strangers don't trample
them,"
I tell anyone who's curious.

(Epiphany:
a footprint is —
a symbol, by definition, of:
"something rooted in the past")

In my mind, I slip my footprints
between the pages —
now whenever I read a book,
I chance upon an old footprint:
I study it for a long time,
the footprint I left as a child
walking beneath a cherry tree.

All the footprints gathered so far,
an entire footstep herbarium in
books —
if I put them all in one row,
their path wouldn't lead me home.

Vasyl Holoborodko
"I Pick up my Footprints"
*Words for War: New Poems from
Ukraine* (2017)

Translated from the Ukrainian by
Svetlana Lavochkina

I've been thinking about the way,
when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people
pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers
still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a
leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't
die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill
lemons
from your grocery bag, someone
else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't
want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup
of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the
person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile
back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets
down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-
up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other,
now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these
brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true
dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make
together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead — you
first," "I like your hat."

Danusha Laméris
"Small Kindnesses"
*Healing the Divide: Poems of
Kindness and Connection from
Green Writers Press* (2020)

Woke up this morning with
a terrific urge to lie in bed all day
and read. Fought against it for a
minute.

Then looked out the window at
the rain.
And gave over. Put myself entirely
in the keep of this rainy morning.

Would I live my life over again?
Make the same unforgiveable
mistakes?
Yes, given half a chance. Yes.

Raymond Carver
"Rain"
*Where the Water Comes
Together with Other Water*
(1985)

i heard your voice this
morning
speaking from the foot of the
bed
your quilt crawled to the
floor
as i lay down in the
first whisper of dawn.
i heard your voice this
morning
the sound of cloth
a casual sound
a sunday morning
preparing to visit your lord
sound
half your life
half my life
half my daughter's life
we all dream of landscapes
romantic deserts
white sands
connecting us together
a half dozen roses
i play out my life
listening every morning
for your voice
at the foot of the bed.

Jackie Shelton Green
NC Poet Laureate
"for grandma"
*Breath of the Song: New and
Selected Poems* (2005)