28. Try to Love the World

Let today’s poem acknowledge life’s difficulties but encourage a heartfelt attempt to keep plugging on through and loving life and the world. Reference both the world’s brokenness and the many existing things and memories worthy of praise or gratitude.

The Thing Is

to love life, to love it even
when you have no stomach for it
and everything you’ve held dear
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,
your throat filled with the silt of it.
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat
thickening the air, heavy as water
more fit for gills than lungs;
when grief weights you like your own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, How can a body withstand this?
Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.

Ellen Bass
in Poetry of Presence: An Anthology of Mindfulness Poems,
edited by Phyllis Cole-Dai & Ruby R. Wilson

The Thing Is
after Ellen Bass’s poem by the same name

To trust life, that is the thing.
To trust it even when there are gaping holes
in the walls of your certainty.

To trust it even when your foundation
feels like a strange place filled with strange people
who all feel more at home in you than you do.

And when fear enters you like a bear in your basement,
or like the three bears, all of them famished,
all of them rummaging through your emergency stores,
yes, when fear offers to give you its name,
when fear brings you a ladder and says, Here,
climb down into yourself, into this chamber

of strangers and bears
when you would rather go anywhere but in,
that is when you step onto the rungs and go down,

one rung at a time. No gun in your hand.
No bear spray. No knife. There is honey
in here somewhere. And tea. So much here

to offer these hungriest parts of yourself.
And you are ready to make peace.
You are ready to meet them and share.

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer
in *Hush*

Try to Praise the Mutilated World

Try to praise the mutilated world.
Remember June’s long days,
and wild strawberries, drops of wine, the dew.
The nettles that methodically overgrow
the abandoned homes of exiles.
You must praise the mutilated world.
You watched the stylish yachts and ships;
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,
while salty oblivion awaited others.
You’ve seen the refugees heading nowhere,
you’ve heard the executioners sing joyfully.
You should praise the mutilated world.
Remember the moments when we were together
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.
Return in thought to the concert where music flared.
You gathered acorns in the park in autumn
and leaves eddied over the earth’s scars.
Praise the mutilated world
and the gray feather a thrush lost,
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes
and returns.

Adam Jagajewski
translated by Clare Cavanagh
Thanks

Listen
with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
standing by the windows looking out
in our directions
back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you
over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you
with the animals dying around us
taking our feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
thank you we are saying and waving
dark though it is

W.S. Merwin
from Migration: New and Selected Poems