

APRIL

IS

NATIONAL

POETRY

MONTH

What Is Out There?

For Robert Evans, amateur astronomer

From my leafy porch,
I hear dogs bark, children yell,
birds chirp, all invisible.
Still, I know they exist

and I picture the size of a dog
from a bark, guess the game being played
from the thud of a ball,
invent a conversation
between unseen sparrows.
I fill in the blanks

like Mr. Evans
in his Australian yard
imagining a supernova
from remnants of sudden light
that fill a vacuum
between familiar stars.

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*Robert Evans was an amateur astronomer in New South Wales, Australia.
He holds the record for visual discoveries of supernovae.*

**Running Down,
Touching the Walls
on Both Sides**

by Barbara Kingsolver

The very least you can do in your life
is figure out what you hope for.

And the most you can do
is live inside that hope.

Not admire it from a distance,
but live right in it, under its roof.

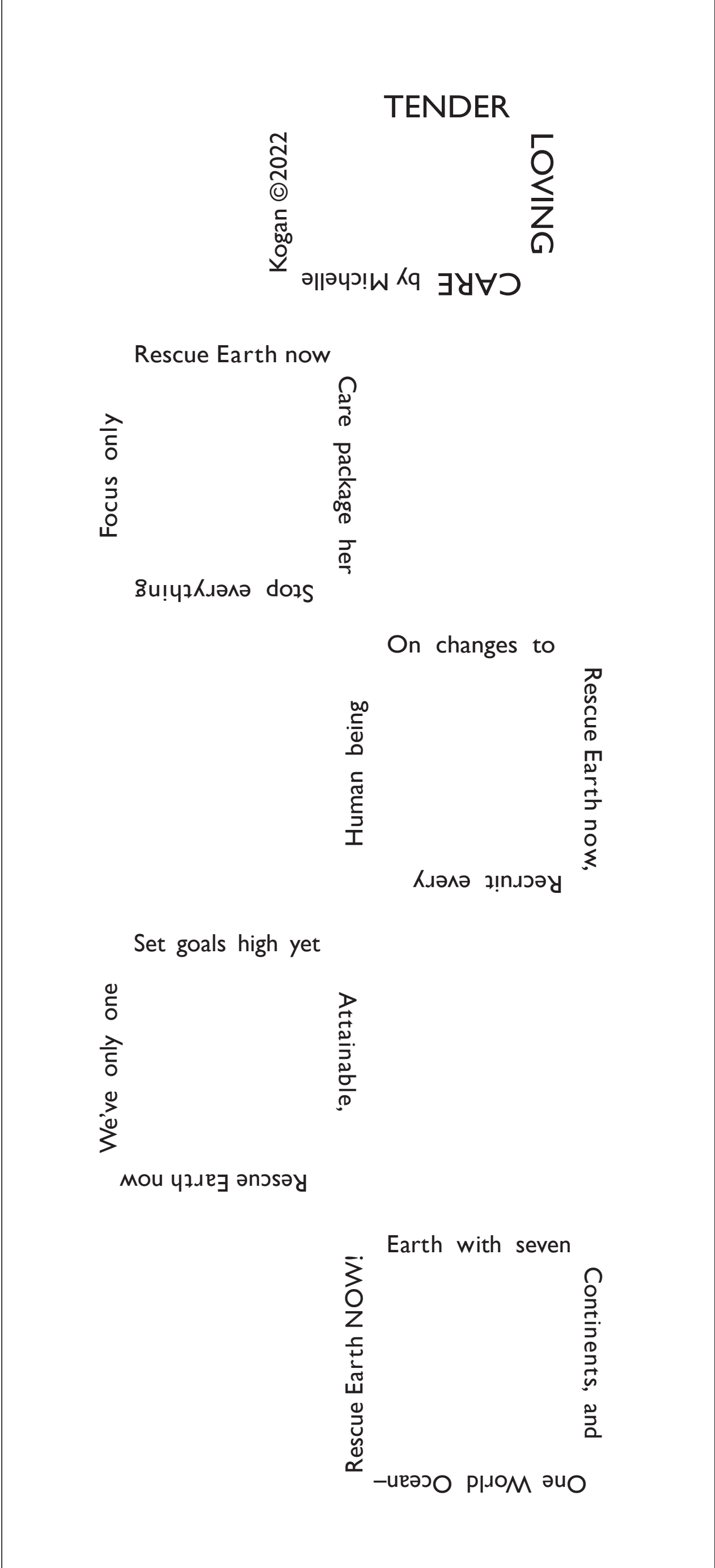
The Cup

by Edward Shanks

As a hot traveller
Going through stones and sands,
Who sees clear water stir
Amid the weary lands,
Takes in his hollowed hands
The clean and lively water,
That trickles down his throat
Like laughter, like laughter,

So when you come to me
Across these parchèd places
And all the waste I see
Flowered with your graces,
I take between my hands
Your face like a rare cup,
Where kisses mix with laughter,
And drink and drink them up
Like water, like water.

Edward Shanks was born in 1892 and was in the British army during World War I.



At a Window

by Carl Sandburg

Give me hunger,
O you gods that sit and give
The world its orders.

Give me hunger, pain and want,
Shut me out with shame and failure
From your doors of gold and fame,
Give me your shabbiest, weariest hunger!

But leave me a little love,
A voice to speak to me in the day end,
A hand to touch me in the dark room
Breaking the long loneliness.

In the dusk of day-shapes
Blurring the sunset,
One little wandering, western star
Thrust out from the changing shores of shadow.

Let me go to the window,
Watch there the day-shapes of dusk
And wait and know the coming
Of a little love.

The Crystal Gazer

by Sara Teasdale
(excerpt)

I shall gather myself
into myself again,
I shall take my scattered selves
and make them one,

I shall fuse them
into a polished crystal ball
Where I can see the moon
and the flashing sun.

Rhapsody

by William Stanley Braithwaite

I am glad daylong for the gift of song,
For time and change and sorrow;
For the sunset wings and the world-end things
Which hang on the edge of to-morrow.

I am glad for my heart whose gates apart
Are the entrance-place of wonders,
Where dreams come in from the rush and din
Like sheep from the rains and thunders.

Haiku

a poem stuck
to the roof of my mouth
morning breath

long afternoon
postponing my fresh start
one more day

day's end
my mask and armor
laid to rest

© Michelle Heidenrich Barnes

Joy and Woe

by William Blake

Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine,

Under every grief and pine,
Runs a joy with silken twine.

It is right it should be so,
We were made for joy and woe,

And when this we rightly know,
Through the world we safely go.

Song of Winnie

by Gwendolyn Brooks
(excerpt)

My Poem is life, and not finished.
It shall never be finished.
My Poem is life, and can grow.

Wherever life can grow, it will.
It will sprout out,
and do the best it can.
I give you what I have.

You don't get all your questions answered in this world.
How many answers shall be found
in the developing world of my Poem?
I don't know. Nevertheless I put my Poem,
which is my life, into your hands, where it will do the best it can.

Two Hours Upon the Stage

by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Again tonight Macbeth kills Duncan,
stabs him in his sleep as he has done
for four hundred twenty-five years,
as he's destined to do for how many
hundreds of years more, never able
to break from what's been written,
ever a victim of his flaws. As I walk
away from the blood-stained stage
into the warm night, I notice how
with every step across the damp grass
my story is still being written,
notice how unfinished I am—
a flawed human yet in service
to the human I will become.

Praise the power to evolve,
the chance to choose to be flower
and not the snake beneath it. Praise
the power to walk away from the script,
to walk away from prophesy, to walk
into the next scene as it comes. Praise
the chance to change, to transform, to turn
while the candle, though brief, still burns.

Shooting Hoops

I could smell his sweat as we stood
side by side on the driveway
Watch how I stand, he said
The ball swished through the net

I took the same wide-leg stance
heaved the ball and...
it fell short... *Try again,*
throw harder, let it go just so...

Me with both hands on the pebbly ball
Bend at the waist and swing up
When I made my first basket
sparks lit his eyes... *That's it!*

We practiced 'til streetlights came on
Mosquitos buzzing in the sultry night
He teaching hoops to his youngest daughter
Me, just a squirt, really trying.

© Karen Eastlund

The Moon

*Pausing between clouds
the moon rests
in the eyes of its beholders*

-Matsuo Basho
translated by Michael R. Burch

100% Me

5% wacky
2% loud
15% smiley
5% proud
3% lazy
40% writing
2% cookies
1% fighting
4% successful
3% dense
15% optimistic
+5% tense

Add it up
You will see
100%
Me, me, me!

© Bridget Magee

September, 1918

by Amy Lowell

This afternoon was the colour of water falling through sunlight;
The trees glittered with the tumbling of leaves;
The sidewalks shone like alleys of dropped maple leaves,
And the houses ran along them
 laughing out of square, open windows.

Under a tree in the park,
Two little boys, lying flat on their faces,
Were carefully gathering red berries
To put in a pasteboard box.

Some day there will be no war,
Then I shall take out this afternoon
And turn it in my fingers,
And remark the sweet taste of it upon my palate,
And note the crisp variety of its flights of leaves.
To-day I can only gather it
And put it into my lunch-box,
For I have time for nothing
But the endeavour to balance myself
Upon a broken world.

What Vincent Couldn't See

by Tabatha Yeatts

If I could journey back a hundred and thirty years
to visit Vincent, interrupt him as he sat

composing a letter to Theo or gazing at the sky
and seeing brush strokes there,

if I could speak the truth of the iris shirts
and sunflower posters, the ginger-haired actors

with starring roles, the admiration glimmering
like moonlight in a rainy street, the applause

that travels through the ages steady as a
steam engine driving past a field of grain,

could he believe in a love that never
touched him at all?

Vincent could witness many worlds
others did not see, but not that.

Can a person approach this world
with a faith in love unfelt, unknown?

Not faith that entire museums
will be devoted to their work,

but confidence in an unknown person
for whom your efforts will be a spark,

someone whose light will catch
by the gentle curve of your flame

leaning across time and space
to ignite.

Haunted Houses

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(*excerpt*)

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the door-way, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapours dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air...

Mother's Lessons

by Doraine Bennett

She taught me to make my bed
before I was out of it, to clean my room,
to fry chicken in a pan of Crisco,
to practice piano, to listen.
She taught me that homework came before play,
that a "B" was never your best,
that a hairbrush was not meant to collect hair.
She taught me justice, but without
mercy that makes it redemptive.
She taught me to be truthful, but
she meant her version, and it was seldom
spoken in love. She taught me
that getting your own way hurts
the ones close to you.
She taught me when bitterness takes root,
you can lose your best friend.
She taught me to be a mother.
Sometimes knowing
what not to do is the best lesson.
Today I sat beside her bed and read.
I held her withered hand in mine
and kissed her wrinkled brow, because
I know what it means to need those things.
She taught me that.

The Spider's Web **(Natural History)**

By E. B. White

The spider, dropping down from twig,
Unfolds a plan of her devising,
A thin premeditated rig
To use in rising.

And all that journey down through space,
In cool descent and loyal hearted,
She spins a ladder to the place
From where she started.

Thus I, gone forth as spiders do
In spider's web a truth discerning,
Attach one silken thread to you
For my returning.

The Dog Says

by Tabatha Yeatts

the dog says, *you need*
to go downstairs

she alternates
standing on her back legs
facing the door
and sitting, leaning forward
pointing her quivering nose at the knob

the pet rabbit
had the run of downstairs,
using the halls as a giant burrow

he savored carrots,
blankets, wrapping paper, and
sofa fabric...
the black bunny ruled
his den with iron teeth

if the door opens,
the dog will race down,
feet barely touching the stairs,
barking as if she were at the bottom
of a tree, alerting you
to a coon in the branches

she will watch the hall devotedly
for a rabbit who will not come,
whose sickness she smelled
in his last days, an odor that made her hide
in the bathroom as if his age
and decrepitude were her fault

he is gone but the memory
pulls her to the same spot
where she waits, nose trembling
as if the scent of hay and sweet black fur
surmounts all distances,
still reaching under the door.