

Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson by Aaron Copland

1. Nature, the gentlest mother
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest, -
Her admonition mild
In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.
How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon, -
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down
Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.
When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky,
With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

2. There came a wind like a bugle,
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the window and the doors
As from an emerald ghost
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of planting trees,
And fences fled away,
And rivers where the houses ran
The living looked that day,
The bell within the steeple wild,
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

3. The World Feels Dusty
When we stop to die.
We want the dew then
Honors taste dry.
Flags vex a dying face
But the least fan stirred by a friend's
hand
Cools like the rain
Mine be the ministry when thy thirst
comes
Dews of thyself to fetch and holy
balms.

4. Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.
When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him!

5. Dear March, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat -
You must have walked -
How out of breath you are!
Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,
I have so much to tell!
I got your letter, and the bird's;
The maples never knew
That you were coming, - I declare,
How red their faces grew!
But, March, forgive me -
And all those hills
You left for me to hue,
There was no purple suitable,
You took it all with you.
Who knocks? that April?

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Lock the door!
I will not be pursued!
He stayed away a year, to call
When I am occupied.
But trifles look so trivial
As soon as you have come,
And blame is just as dear as praise
And praise as mere as blame.

6. Sleep is supposed to be,
By souls of sanity,
The shutting of the eye.
Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand
The hosts of witness stand!
Morn is supposed to be,
By people of degree,
The breaking of the day.
Morning has not occurred!
That shall aurora be
East of Eternity;
One with the banner gay,
One in the red array, -
That is the break of day.

7. Going to Heaven!
I don't know when,
Pray do not ask me how, -
Indeed I'm too astonished
To think of answering you!
Going to Heaven! -
How dim it sounds!
And yet it will be done
As sure as flocks go home at night
Unto the shepherd's arm!
Perhaps you're going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first
Save just a little place for me
Close to the two I lost!
The smallest "robe" will fit me,
And just a bit of "crown";
For you know we do not mind our dress
When we are going home.
Going to Heaven!

I'm glad I don't believe it
For it would stop my breath,
And I'd like to look a little more
At such a curious earth!
I am glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty autumn afternoon
I left them in the ground.

8. The Chariot
Because I would not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
and Immortality.
We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labour, and my leisure too
For his civility.
We passed the school where children
played,
Their lessons scarcely done
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.
We paused before a house that
seemed
a swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.
Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.