

Topsoul

by Claudia Ferraro

Each new day brings more leaving,
brings less leaves on the trees,
more blank sky and less bright things

Each morning brings more shortening,
brings less room for the moon,
and each afternoon more cause to be thirsty

The gone outnumbers the going and
now – honestly – can we just admit that
this is scary?

That all the numbers and dates and data
are screaming at us loudly,
and still it's frightening
how few are listening

Can we admit that we are hanging on
to the hands of a clock
that pays us no mind,
that won't stop spinning

Can we start from this real place of fear,
just so we can get the emotion out of the way?
Just so this fear can be felt enough
to turn itself into something else –
something like firmness,
or fortitude,
or faith

Grounding emotions that remind us of
our small role,
our small place -
because, from now on, we will forever feel late
to this game of preservation but perhaps
it shouldn't be viewed as a race –

I wonder if that's where we went wrong:
the moment we turned to clocks instead of the sun,
the moment we thought time was a thing to be won
and decided all of our learning from the earth was done

When did we forget the wisdom of our mother,
and start searching for answers in the mouths of others?
Did we forget to first sit with her and discuss –
What is a plan in which *she* can trust?

It won't be one hell-bent on progress,
but a plan crafted from the simple stuff

From bare feet that call the ground friend –
and not just support,
from unpolished hands that cleanse themselves
each day in the dirt,
from hearts that hear the way
soil can sing – and dedicate time to witnessing this choir,
to worshipping

It will be a plan led by people who view
convenience as a cuss word,
who know the time it takes to grow their own food
but remain undeterred by any hunger,
who see the value in the way things were
before Canada was given a name,
and perform small acts of love towards the place
we brought so much shame

It is the first lesson we learn:
how to give when we also take –
and it is the first lesson we lose
when our comforts are at stake

It is the reason we have given our whole earth
a single day – as if to say, during these 24-hours,
we will remember the price being paid

We will remember that soil is the earth's soul beating,
and today when we walk barefoot it is two souls meeting,
today when we garden it is soul beneath our fingertips,
the smell of soul in our nostrils,
soul across our faces

What a privilege to be so carelessly covered in her soul,
what a privilege it is to be under her mysterious control,
what a wonder it is the way things grow without
instruction –
the way the earth's body is a self-sustaining production

Tomorrow and forever, focus on the ways you can give
while you gain,
focus on the plants you see
and try to learn their names,
focus on the fact that 2062 is a year
that *will* be – focus on how you change to greet this year,
even if the changes are tiny

Because here they are, as they will always be:
those absent within a war, living happily
And here we are, and here we will stay:
those who've become dirty in their attempts to repay,
those down here,
beneath the topsoul,
digging – dying – for new day

Poem penned for Collingwood Climate Action Team's 2021 Earth
Day virtual meeting and event – to the theme of "Let's Get Dirty"

*"the earth is like a child that knows
poems by heart"*
- Rainer Maria Rilke