

When Despair for the World Grows in Me

After *The Peace of Wild Things* by Wendell Berry

Tamara Harpford

In this wilding world as pompous weeds choke the hope of merciful folk, in which fear takes root over the carcasses of buried books, fertilised with othering, I wake.

Usually I lie, uneasy, and prepare my excuses for a despair-affected day...but from a poem crafted in tribute to Grace, I remember there is another way. I flip the bedsheets from my overheating worry and welcome the cool shock of clear air. In a strange bout of sanity, I pull on comfort clothes and grab the cold car keys from their hook.

There's a pond and I must go there.

I pack my heavy fight and anger so I can toss them into the dark pool amongst the frogs and the mosquito wrigglers and the rotting leaf litter.

When I arrive, at first there's just the rush of stormwater through a drain – an earlier deluge had started cleaning up the greasy streets. As I sit on a slippery log beside the pond I hear the whispers of bin-chicken wings and plover barks and koala grunts, and the reeds' dancing rustle.

There are duck discos in the hours before dawn – who knew?

I ask the ducks if they're afraid, but they don't reply except to utter a thanks to their Eternal Maker, and dance and dive and eat their fill from around the weeds and the reeds. It's not ignorance; it's trust.

I look up, and above a break in the tree canopy opens a break in the clouds, and a solitary star shines through. It winks at me from its seat in the heavenly choir stalls, beyond the present storm.

Somewhere amongst the grey clouds in my head, there is a breath, a rest, a reset. Despair has flown. Around my brow, a nest of grace, woven through with light threads of wariness.

My fight and anger have shrivelled like tea leaves. I carry them home again. I might need them another day.