

# **days of grace**

**soulcraft for uncertain times**

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**soul survival guide**

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## soulcraft for uncertain times

These poems came out of a journey I began last spring, connecting more deeply with nature and a sense of who we are. We're living in extraordinary times. It's cracked the bedrock, revealing the uncertainty of our existence. But light is coming through the cracks - if we wish to see it.

Feel welcome to share the poems freely.

If you would like to find out more about me and my work, see my website: [www.soulsurvivalguide.co](http://www.soulsurvivalguide.co)

Many thanks to the natural world and the wonder-full people that have inspired this work.

**Ali Davenport**  
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i.

Feed your soul  
with nourishing soup;  
long spoonfuls of the stuff  
to sustain you  
& strengthen your bones;  
whatever it is  
that bolsters the heart  
& restores your warmth.

Rest assured,  
there'll be enough.  
The mainspring brims.

Tip the bowl,  
ladle it up  
& drink in deep draughts.

ii.

Making soup comforts me.  
Knife against wood as I chop.  
The feel of vegetables;  
some coarse, others smooth  
in my gathering hands;  
offering them to the pot  
like a white witch with her brew.

We've made soup for centuries,  
conjuring our ancestors with each broth.  
Such a simple spell:  
the warm bubbling calm  
letting us know  
all is well  
all is well.

iii.

Thankfulness  
softens my want & lack,  
eases the hankering.

It brings me to rest,  
showing me  
the wealth of small things;  
how I am already blessed.

What do you have? it asks.  
Enough, I answer, enough.

iv.

My garden is my teacher.  
It shows me how to go with the weather.  
Sun or storm, it says, let's see,  
what straggles & dies,  
what thrives unexpectedly.

Bare ground shrugs off my hopeful seeds.  
This teaches me equanimity.  
For every disappointment, there's a find;  
accidental growth, a surprise bloom.  
My garden is full of gifts.

It schools me on imperfection;  
a sorry stem in a jubilant line.  
Instructs me not to manicure.  
It's a food store, not for show.  
Leave dandelion heads for bees, mow less.  
I'm learning to joy in its wilder-ness.

My garden helps me with loss.  
The seasons turn & fruits give up the ghost,  
tell a story of wilt even at their best.  
In nature's round,  
death worms in the beds with life.  
I can't hang on; it's a practice of letting go.

My garden isn't mine, of course.  
I'm caretaking for a brief patch.  
Apprentice to earth  
that teaches so much.

v.

I don't mind aging.  
Life still flows.  
I'm still growing,  
just growing old.

Why begrudge the young?  
They're having their time  
as I had mine.  
Their turn will come.  
If not, it's a blessing denied.

Would I trade  
all I've learned  
for youthful bones?  
No. I sit in my salt,  
honouring the elder I'll be.  
A crone,  
long in the tooth  
with others of her kind,  
giving complaint short shrift.

Widening to wisdom.  
What a gift.

vi.

Find your tribe,  
the people to sit around the fire with as you are,  
nodding at your stories because they know  
& you, in turn, honouring their words  
with your heart's warmth.

Thread beads with these folk  
on sturdy twine; garland yourself  
to ward away any doubt you belong.

They're yours, this clan,  
this grounding ring.  
Break bread & whittle the shared intent.  
They know the direction of the winds.

They're kin, this tribe  
& when your dance comes  
they'll open their palms,  
receiving your soul-song under the stars.



vii.

Ready for winter  
by letting go like trees.

If oak or birch clung  
they'd risk drying out  
or felling by storms  
catching in leaves.

What can you shed?  
What doesn't serve  
or might harm by hanging on?

No need for impatient shakes.  
Let it go;  
gently now.  
Draw in like trees to stillness.

As the season  
yields to darkness,  
cloister your light till Yule  
when a solstice breath  
rebirths the flame.

No need to cling.  
Let go like trees  
to ready for spring.

viii.

In my wintertide  
when the world whitens out,  
I hunker down & scratch at frozen earth,  
knowing this is how it has to be.  
It's a reckoning with myself  
& I must dig.

Not be done by hard stone,  
by the old hankering  
to resign to cold ground.

Scrape  
with a doggedness to endure  
till my nails prick  
with small determined shards.

This is my grit.

Spurring me on  
to unearth a glow,  
    growing now.

My lantern in the dark.

In your wintertide,  
dig down to find your grit  
& underneath the grit,  
your light.

ix.

In these uncertain times,  
trust the roundel of the day;  
that earth turns  
& dawn comes after night.

Trust the year's ring;  
spring green & bursting seed,  
swelling into summer robes  
before the letting go.

Be sure  
that life beats underground  
in wintertide.  
The wheel shifts.  
There'll be rebirth.

Trust the wax & wane,  
as your ancestors did.  
They're in your bones.  
You walk on ground where they drummed,  
silvered by the same moon.

We're all in this great round.  
Trust & be blessed.

x.

The apple you eat  
grew on a winding tree.  
Its rose & green  
& autumnal tang  
from ancestral apples of its kind.

Unless you harvested it yourself,  
it didn't land in your palm.  
The labour of other hands brought it there.

Honour your treat,  
the intertwining route it took,  
then offer the core to earth.  
Complete the round of this marvellous fruit.

xi.

Be a human tree.  
Push your roots down  
to ancestral ground.  
Know you have always been  
elemental;  
a soil being of infinite potential;  
willed to grow, evolve. Become.

Push down  
to the beating, breathing earth;  
to the rapture of the mycelium horde,  
connected beyond count  
with a trillion times threads.

You are not just enough;  
you are a marvel beyond reckoning,  
renewing yourself on the compost of leaves  
teeming with life that re-turns  
& re-turns.

Stretch out your abundant arms.  
Know how magnificent you are.

xii.

Heads bent to workaday cares,  
we stop seeing sky.

But it's always there,  
celestially flung wide to all points;  
the canopy that colours our days;  
that domed expanse, stretching out.

Drink in its breadth.  
Remember how wonderfully small we are  
in the sacred round; yet held.

Raise your head  
& replenish from its joyful bowl.

xiii.

Widen to wonder.

When there's that spark  
of curiosity,  
life isn't so flat.

Plug in  
& ride the electric rainbow.

It'll thrill not kill the cat.

xiv.

Life offers unwanted threads;  
not the colour we asked for,  
easily snapped.

Work with what you have.  
Be deft. Your fingers know.

Choose your stitch - darn, slip or cross -  
which fabrics to add, cutting your cloth  
accordingly, if needs must;  
a square of sturdy jute, some gauze perhaps.

Your labours will get marked.  
There'll be spills, unwelcome burns.  
You'll worry holes; use a bitter needle  
to unpick lovingly sewn rows.

Mend where you can. Your fingers know.  
You'll sometimes leave ghosts;  
shreds that can't be restored.  
It's still a work of art for all its flaws.  
It's your story, your life's tapestry.  
Tend it well.



xv.

When others strew tangle,  
try not to get caught in the cross-twist.  
It's of their fashioning, not yours.

You'll be drawn in  
if you pick at their knots with tutting teeth.  
It's not for you to meddle.

Tilt your lamp  
to your own craft.

Point your needle  
& tend your stitching  
so that within & without  
are of the same cut.

Match the skein  
from your deep-seated soul  
to who you are in the world.

Tilt your lamp  
& labour by its glow  
till your cloth shows no seams.

xvi.

Be like spider;  
ply ancient craft  
to weave your web.

Be your own storyteller;  
spinning your soul-silk  
to shape your world.

You have more skill than you know;  
an old gift to gather your threads  
& knit glowing orbs,  
balloons to sail air-borne,  
your sturdy fibres strong.  
They'll bear your weight  
while you tether your doubts.

You're more adroit than you know.  
Unloose the power in your palms  
& practise your spider art.

xvii.

You may feel small,  
wondering what you can do.  
Drop your stones all the same.

You might not see the ripples  
but trust they are there,  
circling out.  
Who knows their reach,  
where they'll lap.

Don't judge your pebbles' worth  
by the return.  
Trust the unseen.

Your ripples know their work  
& criss-crossing the wake of other stones,  
in time they'll create waves.

xviii.

When worldly cares press, tip them off.  
They're not yours to lug.  
Resist sinking in the human fog.  
Rise & walk tall.

You're the stuff of stars; born to shine,  
cast brilliance with each stride.  
It doesn't mean you're flying from the night.  
Know the dark but hold your light.

xix.

Truth is,  
you are less than a speck,  
not even flotsam in the rumbling ocean.  
A grain of sand at most.

Almost immaterial.  
A brief breath in a flake of skin.

But it's also true  
that you count beyond reckoning.

Though you may not be the moon  
with the capacity to turn tides,  
you matter immeasurably.

xx.

You arrived in waters  
like all who've gone before.  
You're in the flow.  
Why strain upstream?  
Ride the circular course.

It's only a brief swim  
before you cast your human skin  
& re-turn.

xxi.

We're nothing new.  
Our atoms  
have brewed in dinosaur bowels,  
nested in trees.

Why then, this othering?  
We're kin  
to each other & to the land;  
to every particle of air & star.

As Einstein said,  
experiencing ourselves  
as separate from the rest  
is a kind of optical delusion  
of consciousness.

We're all the same stuff  
& mostly nothing at that.

Take out the space  
from our tiny multitude  
& the human race  
would fit into a sugar cube.

xxii.

We strive to make our mark,  
seizing the land.  
But it was never ours to own.  
It's nature's domain.

When we vanish from earth,  
there'll soon be no trace;  
our palaces consumed,  
our follies torn down.

We're just ants  
on little hills.



xxiii.

We belong to nature,  
no more than fish or tree  
or moss  
which has millions of years on us.

Our time was only ever temporary.  
We're just helping things along  
since we lost respect for the land.  
We thought we were kings.

Time then  
to lay down our broken crowns  
in the sweet grass

& rest

widening to sky

Understanding at last,  
we're no more  
than beetle brushing our palm  
or kiss of wind.

Nature knows  
& blesses this yielding  
to who we are.

xxiv.

We were never going to be here for long.  
We lost that contest before we'd begun  
to ferns & velvet worms.  
We're also-rans  
in a human race towards the end.

Our ancestors sent fire to the skies,  
apocalyptic unease in their gaze.  
Perhaps we've always known,  
we won't be saved.

What matters is now  
- for however long -  
tilling our soil with care;  
sowing for its own sake.

Offering songs of praise to the earth.  
Not for harvest to come  
but for days of grace.

xxv.

Bring it back to the days.  
It's who you are in the hours,  
not tomorrow or next week.

Try not to brood  
on what's down the road.  
It'll keep.

Instead of chasing nextness,  
sit in enoughness.

Bring it back to the days.  
In the days, there's hope.

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