



JOURNEYS  
TO THE  
DEEP

A GUIDE TO  
MEDITATION

ELIZABETH ENGLISH

## Today we learn to fly

Today we learn to fly  
Using the wings you have  
Brought along, the ones  
You made in school that time  
With the fair-haired teacher who  
Tried so hard, but probably  
Cried in the staffroom afterwards.  
And surprise, surprise, the wings  
Never really worked.  
So you added bits here and there  
Over the years, always hoping  
They might come good;  
Hoping for lift-off.  
So these are the wings we will use  
Because they are  
The ones you have.  
And we will start  
By noticing they are there.

## Meditation slot machine

You slot your allotted minutes  
into the slot machine  
of your meditation,

And wait for the fruits to line up  
and shower you with gold;

You growl at the duds,  
those wasted minutes  
when the slot-machine's against you,  
when luck won't play;

This takes you nowhere,  
don't you see?  
Luck is always with you,  
and everything is gold.

You'll get the knack,  
– I promise.

## **For now**

Don't wish for your mind  
to be different from how it is;  
Water does not boil faster  
for glaring at it.

Things take their own time,  
and you, too, are subject to  
the laws of change.

You can only dip your toes  
into the occasional puddles of calm  
that collect in the dips and hollows  
of your undulating thoughts.

Although a tiny droplet of peace  
is all you find, still treasure it;  
It is yours, and all you have –  
for now.



## **Morning sunrise**

A luminous sunrise of red and gold  
Reflecting from the ripples of the Cam;  
Driven by day, and watching it unfold,  
My restless thoughts that skitter on and on;  
There's nothing in this stream of thinking draws  
Me, tempts me into mystery, offers peace,  
That leads me onwards, lifting me towards  
A place of quiet, where troubled thoughts all cease;  
But with the turning of my mind within,  
A gentle thing, no grand or special skill,  
Like a greeting, or a chance remembering,  
I find the sunrise lingers in me still:

Dawn's glorious colour that my body feels,  
Touching me softly as it bathes and heals.

## Whale in my belly

I wish I had a whale  
in my belly,  
like Jonah in reverse,

Then I would know my hugeness  
for what it is;  
I would revel in the giganticness  
of my self.

I wish I had a whale  
in my belly,  
like a circus wonder;

It would splash and somersault  
right through me  
sending me sky-high,  
like a popcorn on the tip  
of a waterspout.  
(The crowds would love it.)

I wish I had a whale  
in my belly,  
it would sing me to sleep  
with low, mysterious tones,  
and send me dreams of vastness  
and glimpses of the deep.

## Meditation Café

What flavour shall we make your thoughts today, sir?  
These delicacies we serve are for the discerning few;  
Draw up a stool, sir; please, peruse the menu.

Many people start with something juicy,  
A steaming slice of grudge, you say, seasoned well with fury?  
Ripe resentments too, left to stew in an old pot,  
We serve them on a tender bed of hurt, fresh-cut.

What next? A platter, perhaps, of pickled plans,  
Eaten raw, prepared by our own hands.  
This all goes down quite nicely with  
A dainty dish of dreams, cooked up with  
Saucy self-created scenes.

Or if it's futile fantasies you crave  
Then add a dash of loneliness or fear  
(Or both, if you feel brave).

Now then, you'll want dessert, let's see,  
You're tempted by the film you saw last night?  
Inspired choice! Scrumptious actors, I agree.  
A heavenly holiday is also worth the time;  
The way your puppy wags its tail (a small delight,  
But equally divine). And after such a feast  
You'll wash it down with slugs  
Of sleepiness? Ah yes, it's true,  
This is our very choicest brew.

You'll come again, I hope, where else would you go?  
We're here to nourish you, and help you grow.  
And if next time you find the café heaving  
At least you know the menu now,  
And can digest its meaning.



## Ode to an ordinary pole

Maypole, flagpole and ski pole,  
Barge pole, bean pole and dance  
pole.

Life without poles, a frigid affair;  
Joyless, defeated and dull,  
and travelling nowhere.

Give me instead  
the smooth and slender surface,  
strong to my fingers' touch,  
and high for my sky-gazer's eyes,  
in silent defiance of gravity,  
a hymn of vertical praise,  
standing in perfect poise  
at the still point of the world.

North and South Poles, too;  
Let's not dismiss what's ordinary,  
or we lose the hidden meanings,  
lustrous in snowy twilight,  
which turn us on our own  
peculiar axis.

Telegraph, tent and silky bamboo;  
Don't let the dust of everyday  
hide the full moon of ourselves  
from ourselves; or the clouds,  
forgetful of the stars, cast shadows  
on our soul's delight. What is  
ordinary  
has power and purpose,  
beyond imagining.

Let us trace our moment here  
in mast and beam and post,  
stand straight and strong, a  
totem pole, perhaps, both  
lean and true, of root and sky,  
a pledge of sorts, a crazy toast,  
a paeon for best and worst,  
to celebrate the mysterious  
markings of life.



## Sonnet for the Golden Lands

Yes, I have wandered in the realms of gold,  
Rich-garnered tales of kings with golden thrones;  
Where royal princes, handsome, young and bold,  
Fall under sad enchantments, cursed by crones;  
How one strange tale speaks of a stolen child  
Who, raised in deepest forests, learns a spell,  
To conjure creatures beautiful and wild,  
And share the secrets only they can tell;  
Where magic weaves its ways through lands of spice,  
With incantations rare in rune and rhyme,  
Which summon gentle genies in a trice,  
Where love and goodness triumph every time;  
    These glimmering lands I lost and left behind  
    Still cast their golden shadows in my mind.