

Ilona Lay: October in the Mountains. Meditations on Happiness



What is happiness? Each person will give a different answer to this question. So there are no universally valid answers in this cycle of poems either. Instead, the cycle revolves around the essence of happiness in 17 meditations, which create a poetic monument to single moments of happiness.

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1. The tapestry of life

Happiness is the immaculate blue of this sky, which rounds before your eyes into a single serene gaze.

A gaze that bathes all things in a soft, pure light. A gaze that blurs the contours of things, but by doing so makes their essence emerge more clearly.

A gaze like from a higher being reviewing its work, which it has smoothed and refined all summer long.

Everything is coloured by this gaze. By following it, you realise: Everything is good. Everything must be exactly as it is. Everything is perfect. Even what seemed unfinished and flawed a moment ago suddenly assumes its natural and necessary place in the overall picture presented to you.

The toppled elm on which the first mushrooms are already sucking, the apple in which wasps have gnawed deep scars, the rose whose hardly awakened blossom has been ruffled by the first autumn wind – all this is connected in a hidden way with what dominates the picture: the wistful glowing of the asters, the addicted buzzing of the bees drinking the last drop of life from the autumn anemones, the bleeding forest.

It may be that all of this is the creation of a high-spirited dice player. But if so, the result is not accidental and chaotic. Rather, he who rolled the dice would then have played with magic marbles that always create a perfect shape, no matter how they are thrown.

For this one moment in which you are completely immersed in the all-embracing gaze, you understand, no: you feel deep inside: The tapestry of life is indivisible.

Everything woven into this tapestry is intertwined with everything else. Every detail, no matter how small, is essential to make it shine with a splendour that

surpasses the sum of its parts; that makes it an all-embracing work of art teaching you tranquillity and devout attentiveness.



2. Whispering waves

Happiness is a river standing still in the middle of its movement. Looking at its bottom, you can see the millions of years that have preceded your existence flowing together with the millions of years that will follow your existence.

Everything gathers in a single point which, however tiny it may seem, incorporates everything past and future.

Without realising it, you are plunging towards that point. The closer you come to it, the further it appears to you. When you reach it, it is a black hole at the bottom of time. In an instant you sink into it.

You are a part of the river, the whisper of the waves is penetrating your skin, it is flooding your veins, it makes you awaken while you are dreaming, and dream while you are awakening.

"Nothing has ever passed", the waves whisper to you without you hearing it. "Nothing passes, and nothing will come into being. Time is not a line, but a circle, a swirl that contracts itself into a single point. Every moment comprises all other moments."

Even as you lift your gaze again and re-emerge from that moment outside time, the glittering smile of the waves is still embracing you while the river eludes you gurgling.



3. The dissolving God

Happiness is that moment when you realise: "God" is only a word, a mere shell, a term for nothing and nobody, the perfect void.

"God" is that which encompasses and permeates everything, that in which everything is founded, that from which everything lives.

Perhaps this is exactly what the first man who said "God" intended to say. However, you cannot help thinking of a higher being when you say "God"; a being that consciously acts and effects on the earthly life, a being that can even blame and praise, punish and reward. What you imagine or name as "God" can therefore never be "God".

Thus, if you want to speak truly of "God", only the absolute nameless, insubstantial can be meant. Something that is there, without you ever being able to ascertain whether it is there. Something that surrounds you and flows through you, without you being able to determine even the tiniest fragments of its insubstantial substance.

Indeed, something must have been there when the universe erupted from itself. And something will be there when it returns into itself one day. That which is expanding and contracting must be more than what it brings to life by doing so. But its existence is the existence of negativity, something far beyond human imagination. If it were otherwise, the nameless would not be what it is.

The Divine is like a black hole: you can never see it directly, but only indirectly infer its existence.

And even these indirect signs of its existence are only like eternally enigmatic hieroglyphics of a perished culture, like images that you do not even recognise as images because they come from a galaxy light years away, where a completely different language of forms prevails than the one you are accustomed to.

Nevertheless, the moment when you recognise the absolute emptiness and incomprehensibility of what you used to call "God" is a moment of happiness

for you. For only now do you no longer deceive yourself by believing in a children's God, but open yourself up to the unfathomable.

In this way you can at least surmise the Divine in a likeness: in the whisper of the leaves dancing on the wings of the autumn wind into eternity, or in the infinity of the night, in which now, instead of hiding them behind a childish curtain of man-made images, you recognise a labyrinth of innumerable worlds. None of them is within your reach, and yet they all have their roots in the same nameless source as your own world.



4. The bridge of light

Happiness is this mountain massif which both threatens and shelters you.

This mountain massif that has been watching over the world since man was just one animal among others – and that will still be watching over the world when the world has long forgotten about you.

This mountain massif that both repels and attracts you. Unapproachable, the rugged cliffs stand in your way. But their summits are bathed in a light that shines over to you from another world. A light that shows you a bridge into a realm for which your language has no words and your mind no images.

You will never be able to overcome the wall of foreignness that separates the mountain massif from you. You know, it will destroy you if you become too familiar with it.

And yet the vicinity of this absolute unfamiliar world is a source of happiness for you – precisely because there is no other place where you can come so close to it; to something that gives you an idea of what outlasts and surpasses you, what is root and roof for you.



5. Metamorphoses

Happiness is that moment when you step completely out of yourself and become at one with another being.

Happiness is this robin that suddenly is no longer just a passing bird, but a fellow being that touches your own being. For a short moment you feel included in the lightness of its flight. You feel the fear when the shadow of a large bird scurries by, and you are part of the pleasure when the little beak rushes hungrily through the cobwebs among the privet bushes.

Happiness is this mountain spring that you come across after a long hike. It is the cooling wetness in your throat, the sparkling water, which is suddenly no longer just a means of quenching your thirst, but a magic potion that sustains and creates life.

Happiness is this birch leaf that detaches itself from the branch that nursed and nurtured it.

It is this short flight through freedom that, as you hover with the birch leaf, feels like a lifetime.

This short, boundless dance that is both frenzy and despair. This journey which, after so many twists and turns, after all the struggles with the seditious winds and the fleeting encounters with other leaves, yet ends again in a harbour that firmly encloses the airship within itself.

Never before have you felt so clearly as in this moment that one day, after countless metamorphoses, it will take off anew for a flight into freedom.



6. Fragile Texture

Happiness is that moment
in which your self is reflected
in the being of another person

That moment in which
the self widens to a We
but precisely because of this
your self emerges from its haze

That moment in which
an invisible bond
of spirit enfolds the two of you
so dense that it materialises
into action

That moment in which
your life is merging
with that other life

That moment in which
one life becomes
the source of the other life
and the death of the other one
is more deadly than the own death

That moment in which
the absolute value of a single life
teaches you
the absolute value of all life

That moment from which
you see the world
as a fragile texture

threatened
by every thoughtless breathing

That moment from which
your steps become attentive
and your eyes open
for all the little works of art in life
which you have passed by blindly
in the long years of darkness

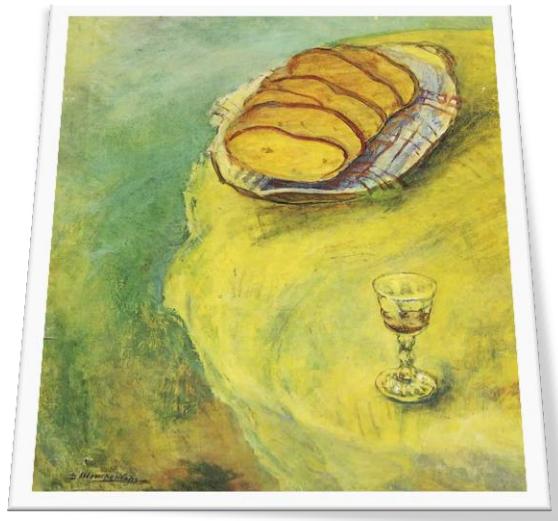


7. The happiness of unhappiness

Happiness is that moment
when unhappiness enters your heart

That moment when you realise:
No happiness is ever perfect
as long as its door is not open to everyone

That moment when you
cut your happiness into thin slices,
so that everyone can eat their fill of it



Video to the poem (German): [Das Glück des Unglücks](#)

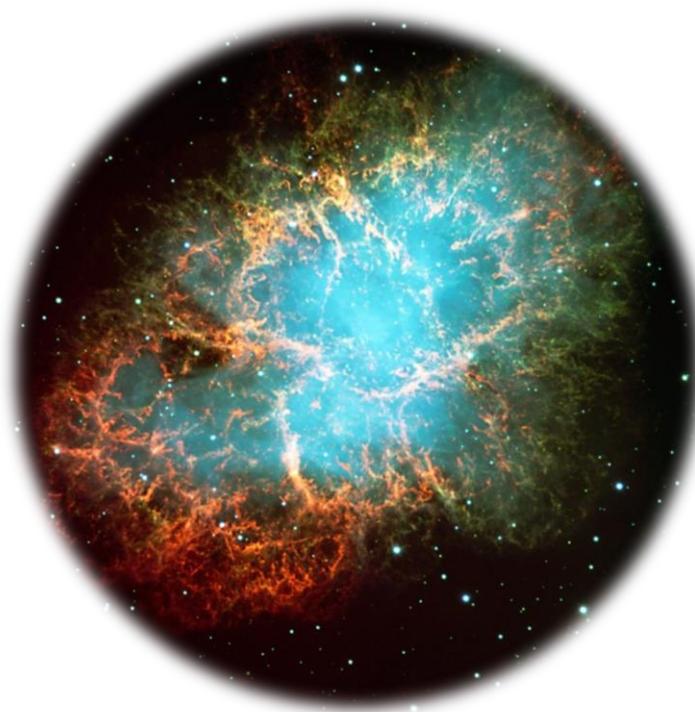
8. The unfreedom of freedom

Happiness is that moment when you
recognise the unfreedom of your freedom

That moment when you
throw off the robe of riches
in which your unfreedom is dressed
to appear to you as freedom

That moment when you
tear the veil off your freedom's face
to discover the true freedom behind it

That moment when you
turn from a hunter of happiness
into an open eye
waiting to be filled with happiness



Video to the poem (German): [Die Unfreiheit der Freiheit](#)

9. The rainbow journey

Happiness is the devotion
of these children's hands
seducing a log of wood
to a rodeo ride
on the gurgling mountain stream snake

A log of wood
that a chestnut leaf
vagabonding
is crowning to a dragon ship

A dragon ship
that the bouncing pack of drops
dancing Ring-a-ring o' roses
is endowing with wings

A winged ferry
which the devotion of the children's gaze
is sending on a rainbow journey
to a harbour
in another world



10. Sparkling drizzle

Happiness is that moment
in which you sink
into the warming arms
of the all-hiding
all-revealing light

That moment when
behind your closed eyes
the world is falling apart
into a sparkling drizzle

That moment when you realise
the illusion
of figures and forms
boundless flowing
into each other
in every single moment

You too are only
an arbitrary drop
ejected
for a short moment
from the all-pervading
all-encompassing life stream
into which you will return
after a wink of the eye

But now
in that moment
in which the light
completely embraces and fills you
is like a tiny winding road
glistening in the depth of the gorge
the all-transforming stream

Dreaming you can sense the source
from which it feeds itself
the never exhausted abundance of its power
from which
pushed back into itself
freed from its externalisation
into the circle of figures
emanates the breath of completeness:
the void



11. The abyss of happiness

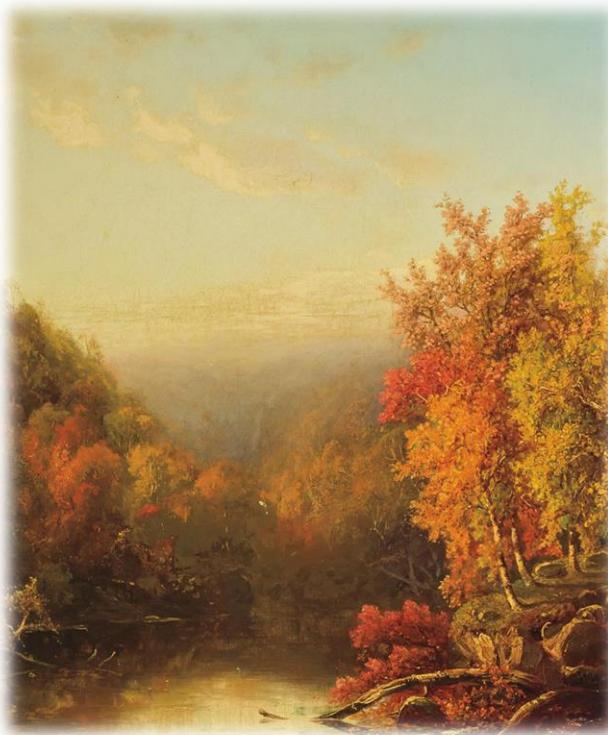
Happiness is a mountain lake
embracing and caressing you motherly

A lake that teaches you the shorelessness
without taking away the shore from you

A lake that teaches you the weightlessness
without alienating yourself from your roots

A lake that makes you balance dancing
over the abyss that opens up beneath you

A lake on which you are floating back to back
with your gaze interwoven in that other abyss
which arches above you unfathomably



Video to the poem: [The abyss of happiness](#)

12. The singing of silence

Happiness is the singing of silence
that you perceive
when you attune to it:

the murmuring of the leaves
in which the autumn wind roams

the morning meditation of the bells
of cows above the whispering grass

the teetering twittering blackberry bushes
and the glowing hum of the asters

the soundless scurrying squirrel,
revealed by the groaning branches

the raven's dark-knowing call
and the forest-coloured cries of the jay

the summit singing of the mountain stream
filled with
the blue silence of the sky



13. The umbilical cord of the breath

Happiness is that moment
in which you withdraw completely
into the umbilical cord of your breath

That hovering moment of contemplation
after the carnival of creatures
that motionless moment in which
the tidal current of time
silently flowing through you
invisibly feeding you
collects itself within itself

That moment of brightest darkness
in which the glittering gates
of gloom open up
and make you wake up
as someone else's dream
in another world
infinitely far away
and infinitely close
at the same time.



14. Crystalline emptiness

Happiness is
this crystalline emptiness
in which the oak is dressed
after the colourful frenzy of forms

this winding awaitedness
in which already germinate
the fruits of your future possibilities

this crystalline emptiness
which spreads out unreachable
over the sea of mountain ridges
flowing into it
in the dreamed distance

this crystalline emptiness
through which a single raft of clouds is drifting
devoting itself
to the breath of the wind



Video to the poem (German with English subtitles): [Das Glück der Leere](#)

15. The homesickness of the clouds

Happiness is
this silky tapestry
which weightlessly rises
out of the murmuring rain

this cocoon of pearls
that healingly lies down
on the scars of the rock cheeks

this levitating nymph breath
fragrant of sage and dóst
that penetrates your pores

this homesickness of the clouds
and their dancing tears
on their whirring way home



16. Magic writing

Happiness is the luminous larch
amid the dark wave of spruces

the hawkweed star
amid the faded grass

the blushing summit
under the sunlight lips

the magic writing of the lichens
in the wrinkle tangle of the rocks

the serenity of the moon
on the escaping stream

the grail of the mountain ridge
under the purple hem of the night



17. The eye of the night

Happiness is the glistening eye of the night
floating in flickering curls of clouds

Happiness are the groping glances of the night
in the praying arms of the maple tree

Happiness is the magic scepter of the night
wandering on the awakening paths

Happiness is the glimmering eye of the night
in the gloomy swirls of the lake of time



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