



Claude Monet created a series of paintings depicting hay in a field. He painted the same haystacks twenty-five times from the summer through the spring; however, every painting is different. Sometimes the haystacks are covered in snow and looking at them evokes a feeling of calm serenity; other times the painting is filled with bright, joyful light. The same haystacks are never the same.

Everything changes. We all know that, but there are periods during which time seems to stand still and everything appears to be the same as before. I found myself with a gentle afternoon routine at the garden. At around 4:30, I'd feed the chickens and give the rabbits fresh water. Then I'd sit down in the Honey House for some time in prayer as the chickens would take their time outside before retreating into the coop for the night. This simple routine became the favorite part of my day – a quiet winding down in preparation for whatever the evening was to hold. I was so fond of it that one afternoon when I realized that the chickens were still scratching around outside at twenty minutes after five, I could feel myself internally hanging onto this structure, wanting to keep this routine the way it was. As I stood at the window, watching, waiting and wishing, I thought of the chickens we lost a few weeks before - a fox or a raccoon we think. That was a big change, a sudden, nearly traumatic one that illustrated some of the workings of nature. The change I was observing outside the window was the slow every-day sort – a few moments more of light each evening. Hushed and firm, the words spoken by poets and kings whispered through my mind – “this too shall pass.” I released my wish and made an intentional decision to appreciate the moment I was in and then allow it to float away.

Another big change happened a few nights ago – a blizzard that dropped twenty inches of snow! All of a sudden, the walk to and from the garden became an entirely new experience that included less walking and more marching and tripping. The animal chores became well-planned routes that would require the fewest number of steps in the knee-high snow. The bare, frozen ground became a clean and pure blanket of white broken only by my footprints in their curvy path. After several journeys in the snow, it seemed that once again time was at a standstill, nothing was changing, and yet everything was. The smooth blanket was disrupted by, not only my own footprints, but those of a fox and a squirrel that must have climbed up the cherry tree across the path. The roads were cleared; the sky was blue; the rabbits' tunnels were dug; the birdfeeder was empty; the quiet calm that was there during the blizzard gave way to the normal hustle and bustle of daily life. “Appreciate every moment,” I reminded myself, “Live every moment. Everything's changing.”

Monet not only recognized this and was able to see the beauty in it, he was able to express that beauty with his canvas and his brush. I wonder if that is somehow the invitation to each of us, to

appreciate the beauty of every moment, alive with the recognition that it will never pass this way again.

It's almost time, now, for me to head over to the chickens for their afternoon care. Though it's a little bit later in the day, my routine continues only slightly altered. The snow has now become a grey slush that reaches to my ankles. When seasons progress and interruptions occur and it's time to let go and move on, this routine will evolve. For today, I will sit in the Honey House grateful for the ever-changing haystacks in my life. I will pray that my life express the beauty of the impermanent just as Monet did with his paint. My life is made up of little moments of light and color, chickens, snow and prayer. As I hold each moment, those wisdom words whisper, "This too shall pass," and I remember to open my hands.

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