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# After Much Pain

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## AFTER MUCH PAIN

“After great pain, a formal feeling comes”  
Emily Dickinson

After much pain, a feeling alone is there—  
alien, far from all that you have known  
from books and pictures, scientists’  
discoveries, wisdom’s commentaries.

The mind finally feels distant, the body  
is drawn away from its basic functions, feels  
too amply satisfied to remember itself  
or other bodies, other worlds, not its own.

Body and mind are entwined by a thread of  
compassion for the heart’s much-dislocated  
spaces and years, happenings of hopes and tears  
that could never be what they were meant to be,

while the passive earth looks on and withdraws  
into itself, as if it was thinking of something  
gone wrong somewhere in the wild universe—  
something it had never witnessed or understood.

The time is late morning now, and there are  
invitations from near and faraway places, each to be  
attended to, taken notice of, each to be believed  
as something where no pain could ever be, no tears.

Every small thing is overly busy recollecting itself  
in the very middle of a whirlpool of disbelief, even as  
the same feeling quietly relaxes, recalls each pain and  
insult, each piece of advice, each earlier body.