

# Thumbprint

By: Eve Merriam

On the pad of my thumb  
are whorls, whirls, wheels,  
in a unique design:  
mine alone.

5 What a treasure to own!  
My own flesh, my own feelings.  
No other, however grand or base,  
can ever contain the same.

My signature,  
10 thumbing the pages of my time.

My universe key,  
my singularity.

Impress, implant,  
I am myself,

15 all of my atom parts I am the sum.  
And out of my blood and my brain  
I make my interior weather,  
my own sun and rain.

Imprint my mark upon the world,  
20 whatever I shall become.

## **Sonnet 18**

A poem by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	<b>A</b>
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:	<b>B</b>
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,	<b>A</b>
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:	<b>B</b>
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,	<b>C</b>
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;	<b>D</b>
And every fair sometime declines,	<b>C</b>
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;	<b>D</b>
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,	<b>E</b>
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;	<b>F</b>
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,	<b>E</b>
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:	<b>F</b>
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,	<b>G</b>
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.	<b>G</b>

## **Sonnet 30**

A poem by: Edna St. Vincent Millay

"Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink	<b>A</b>
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;	<b>B</b>
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink	<b>A</b>
And rise and sink and rise and sink again;	<b>B</b>
Love can not fill the thickened lung with breath,	<b>C</b>
Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;	<b>D</b>
Yet many a man is making friends with death	<b>C</b>
Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.	<b>D</b>
It well may be that in a difficult hour,	<b>E</b>
Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,	<b>F</b>
Or nagged by want past resolution's power,	<b>E</b>
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,	<b>F</b>
Or trade the memory of this night for food.	<b>G</b>
It well may be. I do not think I would."	<b>G</b>

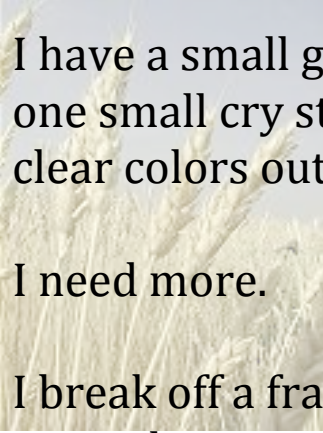
Cathy Song  
"Lost Sister"

1 In China,  
even the peasants  
named their first daughters  
Jade—  
the stone that in the far fields  
could moisten the dry season,  
could make men move mountains  
for the healing green of the inner hills  
glistening like slices of winter melon.  
And the daughters were grateful:  
They never left home.  
To move freely was a luxury  
stolen from them at birth.  
Instead, they gathered patience;  
learning to walk in shoes  
the size of teacups,  
without breaking—  
the arc of their movements  
as dormant as the rooted willow,  
as redundant as the farmyard hens.  
But they traveled far  
in surviving,  
learning to stretch the family rice,  
to quiet the demons,  
the noisy stomachs.

There is a sister  
across the ocean,  
who relinquished her name,  
diluting jade green  
with the blue of the Pacific.  
Rising with a tide of locusts,  
she swarmed with others  
to inundate another shore.  
In America,  
there are many roads  
and women can stride along with men.  
But in another wilderness,  
the possibilities,  
the loneliness,  
can strangulate like jungle vines.  
The meager provisions and sentiments  
of once belonging—  
fermented roots, Mah-Jong tiles and firecrackers—set but  
a flimsy household  
in a forest of nightless cities.  
A giant snake rattles above,  
spewing black clouds into your kitchen.  
Dough-faced landlords  
slip in and out of your keyholes,  
making claims you don't understand,  
tapping into your communication systems  
of laundry lines and restaurant chains.  
You find you need China:  
your one fragile identification,  
a jade link  
handcuffed to your wrist.  
You remember your mother  
who walked for centuries,  
footless—  
and like her,  
you have left no footprints,  
but only because  
there is an ocean in between,  
the unremitting space of your rebellion.

# For the New Year, 1981

A poem by Denise Levertov



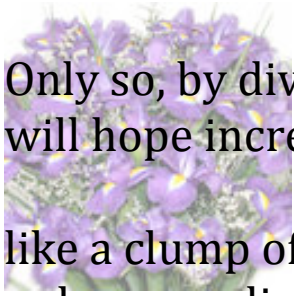
I have a small grain of hope ---  
one small cry stal that gleams  
clear colors out of transparency.

I need more.

I break off a fragment  
to send you.

Please take  
this grain of a grain of hope  
so that mine won't shrink.

Please share your fragment  
so that yours will grow.



Only so, by division,  
will hope increase,

like a clump of irises, which will cease to flower  
unless you distribute

The cluttered roots, unlikely source---  
clumsy and earth-covered---  
of grace.

## Author: Langston Hughes

<http://www.learner.org/catalog/extras/vvspot/video/hughes.html>

(Written in 1951)

What happens to a **d**ream **d**eferred?

- ..... Does it **d**ry up 4
- ..... like a **r**aisin in the **s**un?
- ..... Or **f**ester like a **s**ore—
- ..... And then run?
- ..... Does it **s**tink like rotten meat?
- ..... Or **c**rust and **s**ugar over—
- ..... like a **s**yrupy **s**weet?
  
- ..... Maybe it just **s**ags
- ..... like a heavy load.
  
- ..... Or *does it explode?*

## **Pride**

A poem by Dahlia Ravikovitch

I tell you, even rocks  
crack,  
and not because of  
age.

For years they lie on their backs  
in the heat and the cold,  
so many years,  
it almost seems peaceful,  
They don't move, so the cracks stay hidden.

A kind of pride.

Years pass over them, waiting there.

Whoever is going to shatter them  
hasn't come yet.

And so the moss flourishes, the seaweed  
whips around,  
the sea pushes through and rolls back----  
the rocks seem motionless.

Till a little seal comes to rub against them,  
comes and goes away.

And suddenly the rock has an open wound.

I told you, when rocks break, it happens by surprise.

And people, too.



## **Women**

A poem by Alice Walker

They were women then  
My mama's generation  
Husky of voice---Stout of  
Step  
With fists as well as  
Hands  
How they battered down  
Doors  
And ironed  
Starched white  
Shirts  
How they led  
Armies  
Headragged Generals  
Across mined  
Fields  
Bobby-trapped  
Kitchens  
To discover books  
Desks  
A place for us  
How they knew what we  
*Must* know  
Without knowing a page  
Of it  
Themselves.



**To A Mouse.**

**On turning her up in her nest with the plough, November 1785.**

Small, sleek, cowering, timorous beast,  
O, what a panic is in your breast!  
You need not start away so hasty  
With hurrying scamper!  
I would be loath to run and chase you,  
With murdering plough-staff.

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
And justifies that ill opinion  
Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor, earth born companion  
And fellow mortal!

I doubt not, sometimes, but you may steal;  
What then? Poor beast, you must live!  
An odd ear in twenty-four sheaves  
Is a small request;  
I will get a blessing with what is left,  
And never miss it.

Your small house, too, in ruin!  
It's feeble walls the winds are scattering!  
And nothing now, to build a new one,  
Of coarse grass green!  
And bleak December's winds coming,  
Both bitter and keen!

You saw the fields laid bare and wasted,  
And weary winter coming fast,  
And cozy here, beneath the blast,  
You thought to dwell,  
Till crash! the cruel plough past  
Out through your cell.

That small bit heap of leaves and stubble,  
Has cost you many a weary nibble!  
Now you are turned out, for all your trouble,  
Without house or holding,  
To endure the winter's sleety dribble,  
And hoar-frost cold.

But Mouse, you are not alone,  
In proving foresight may be vain:  
The best laid schemes of mice and men  
Go often askew,  
And leaves us nothing but grief and pain,  
For promised joy!

Still you are blest, compared with me!  
The present only touches you:  
But oh! I backward cast my eye,  
On prospects dreary!  
And forward, though I cannot see,  
I guess and fear!

***Tell all the Truth  
But tell it slant----***

*By: Emily Dickinson*

*Tell all the Truth but tell it slant---  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind---*