

The Quiet Wisdom of Daffodils

There are some days when the world feels like it's pressing down on you, like it's all just too much. The kind of day when the questions and doubts pile up faster than you can shove them away. I used to spend those days chasing answers, frantically sketching, writing, doing anything to feel like I was moving forward. But these days, I try to do something different. I try to just sit still.

Right now, I'm sitting in my studio. The light's coming through the window at that perfect late-afternoon angle, the kind that makes everything feel a little softer. My sketchbook is open in my lap, but I haven't touched the pencil. There's no rush.

Years ago, I didn't know how to do this — just sit with things, let them be. I thought peace and understanding were things you had to chase down, things you earned through hard work and determination. But I've learned — mostly the hard way — that sometimes the best thing you can do is stop chasing.

It reminds me of a day I spent in a small village, not too far from the edge of a forest. I was traveling then, running away from things, but also running toward something. I had no idea what I was looking for, but I kept hoping that if I traveled far enough, I'd find it. So there I was, in this quiet little place, carrying my sketchbook like it was a map that could lead me to where I needed to go.

It was the middle of the day, and I found myself in a meadow just outside the village. The air smelled like earth and wildflowers, that thick, sweet scent that comes after a rain. I wasn't alone. There were children playing, running through the grass, their laughter cutting through the air in a way that made me pause. They weren't trying to get anywhere. They weren't trying to prove anything. They were just there, being children. They ran, they spun, they collapsed into the grass with arms flung wide as though they could embrace the whole sky. I envied them that simplicity.

I sat down under a tree, my sketchbook still in my lap, but I didn't feel like drawing. I just wanted to sit there, to watch. There's something about watching children play that reminds you of how things used to be, before the world got so heavy, before life became about carrying things you didn't ask for.

One of the kids caught my eye — a little boy, crouched down near a stick. He wasn't running around like the others. He was focused, intensely focused, on something small. I couldn't help myself. I walked over and knelt beside him.

"What are you looking at?" I asked, my voice soft.

He looked up at me, his eyes wide with wonder. "The ants," he said, his voice matter-of-fact, like he was explaining something I should've already known. "They're building something. They know where they're going, even though I don't."

I glanced down and saw them — a steady line of ants, each one carrying something, each one moving with purpose. I sat there with him for a while, watching those ants. They didn't

hesitate. They didn't doubt. They just kept going, like they had some internal map leading them forward, even if the rest of us couldn't see it.

There was something comforting about it, watching those ants march forward, step after tiny step, as if they knew something the rest of us didn't.

As I got up to leave, I noticed a little girl sitting nearby. She wasn't running or laughing with the other kids. She was just sitting there, holding a daffodil in her lap. There was something about her stillness that drew me in. So I walked over, knelt down again, and asked, "What do you see?"

She looked up at me, her face calm, and said, "It's like holding sunshine," as she turned the daffodil slowly in her hands. "I see a tiny sun," she said, "small enough to hold in my hand. If I blow on it, its light will float away like stars."

Her words stopped me in my tracks. She wasn't searching for anything, she wasn't trying to make sense of it all. She was just holding that flower like it was the most natural thing in the world. And maybe it was.

I left the meadow that day, but their words — the boy's, the girl's — stayed with me. There was something about their certainty, their simplicity, that I couldn't shake. They weren't trying to figure anything out. They weren't questioning everything the way I was. They were just there, with what was in front of them. And that was enough.

Later, I found myself telling my friend Amara about it. We were sitting outside, the sun setting behind us, and I told her about the boy and his ants, the girl and her daffodil, and how their words had followed me home. I wasn't even sure why I was telling her, but I needed to say it out loud.

Amara, as usual, listened patiently. When I finished, she smiled that knowing smile of hers and said, "You've been chasing peace, Luca. But peace isn't something you can run after. It comes when you stop running. The boy with his ants, the girl with her flower — they weren't looking for answers. They were just there, present in the moment, and that was enough."

She was right. I knew it as soon as she said it. I'd been running for so long, trying to capture something that wasn't meant to be caught. But the peace I was chasing had been right there all along, waiting for me to stop, to let it come to me.

Now, as I sit here in my studio, the light fading into evening, I think about those kids. I think about the way they saw the world, with no need to explain it or make sense of it. They were just there. And that was enough.

I look down at my sketchbook, the lines I've drawn. They aren't perfect. But I don't need them to be. What matters is that I'm here, that I'm present, that I'm letting the world be what it is, without trying to control it.

I pick up my pencil, ready to draw again. There is no rush. There never was.

— *William Zeitler*
2024 September 30

© 2024 William Zeitler. Originally published at GrailHeart.com

