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Awake

By Zoë Rachael Gunn

Eyes of despair, she sits
"Stay awake," the professor asks
The world needs you
These times need you
And You need your Self.

The weight of the knowledge of tragedy
the temptation to close it off and forget
"Stay awake," the pastor urges
The world needs you
These times need you
And You need your Self.

Helplessness in overwhelm, ease in apathy?
"Stay awake," the activist begs
The world needs you
These times need you
And You need your Self.

Out in the forest
she climbs upon a rock
She breathes in deeply
preparing to scream her frustration
into the forest consciousness
But instead,
 filled with communal air
 she sighs
 and slumps onto the rock
 that holds her

She looks about
 The treetops reaching for the clouds
 but never trying to catch them
 The moss and lichen,
 modest existence
 Dead but essential leaves,
 shuffle and crunch

And she feels:

These are my people
and I love them.

And the forest whispers:

Stay Awake with us
The world needs you
These times need you
And You need your Self.

“I am trying,” she responded, “but it hurts so badly”
She paused. “Why do I love you, forest?”

And the forest rustled, “Because we are awake, child.
We are awake even through death,
as the fallen leaves make fresh soil
for new life. We are here for you
to walk with and find solace for your
Self. We are a model for the ecosystem
you wish to build within your Self.”

She nodded, hugging the forest within.
Then she looked at her clock and it said Winter
and she looked at the sky and it said dusk

And the forest rustled again,
“Go now and rest, for you are in the midst of Life.
The journey ahead is arduous as was the journey behind
Be restful but keep your spirit awake
Remembering that a fire too freshly lit
is not useful for cooking on
and that a fire must be
lovingly stoked
and cautiously fed
to maintain the balance
to stay awake.”