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Stories are a communal currency of humanity.

— Tahir Shah, *In Arabian Nights*

The most powerful and enduring connection we share as a human race is our desire and need to share stories. We engage in the art of storytelling more than most of us ever realize; whether we are describing our kids' soccer games, critiquing the latest HBO series, telling a ribald joke, or remembering a long lost friend, event, memory, book, or experience. We listen to stories in songs, in long-winded meetings, in late night BBC broadcasts or self aggrandizing talk radio, on long car rides, and in intimate conversations with friends and lovers. We tell stories for reasons that are so deeply embedded in our psyche and DNA that storytelling is a natural and intuitive response to almost any situation.

Sometimes, when stuck with a rather boorish person, we wonder why the sam hill that person insists on telling insipid stories; but, most of the time we listen, reflect, and respond—usually with stories of our own. It is out of this verbal give and take—our personal and cultural oral tradition—that we reflect and grow and expand the range of our limitations. It is our way to “shuffle off our mortal coil” while still alive. Through stories we live outside and beyond the confines of our short sojourn on earth, but while we are here and struggling through the vicissitudes of everyday life, it is stories that feed our roots and spread our canopy upwards into an infinite sky.

Stories that are worth telling once are worth retelling again and again. Out of this stream of unconscious revision a story is perfected until that story becomes part and parcel of our personal, interconnected, and communal eternity. The best stories survive the ravages of time because we know and sense with an almost mystic unknowingness that a particular story is too good or important to forget. These stories become the canons of our universal literature. We go back to those stories like spawning salmon to the streams of their birth. We need to know our source, and the best and most enduring stories lead us there, even against the tides, currents, and shoals that seem to bar the way. We need to tell and hear and read the stories that bring us to these places.

We need to limit the trivial and search for and embrace the profound stories that have weathered the ravages of time. We need to ask ourselves why we read what we read, listen to what we choose to listen to, and tell what we feel needs to be told. We can't go on accepting the debased and vapid simply because it is there and easy at hand in its glorified, extolled, and commercialized abundance. We need to seek the higher fruit and *walk among the dappled grass and pluck until time and time is done, the the silver apples of the moon [and] the golden apples of the sun.**

Today is as good a day as any to look back and in and begin moving forward. Shut something off, and turn something else on. There is something else on your shelf, something

in your mind, and something within your range that is waiting for you.

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The Song of Wandering Aengus

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And someone called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

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