

Eric Maisel

90 Days of Nature



Wellness Journal Series

This journal provides you with inspiring (and sometimes provocative) quotes from artists on their relationship to nature. By using each quote as a journal prompt, you give yourself the opportunity to forge a powerful daily relationship to the natural world, whether or not you get out into nature on a given day.

Many things contribute to our sense of well-being and to our emotional health. Love is one. Meaningful work is another. A warm and embracing home environment is another. For many, it's the relationship with their partner and their children. And also built into our species' radar is a connection to nature. Or rather, connections, since there are many possible attitudes about nature and responses to nature.

Use these quotes from the world's great artists as jumping off points for your own 90-day exploration of your relationship to nature. I'll provide a journal prompt or question to accompany each quote, but the quote itself may well provoke you to journal in a different direction from the direction my prompt or question suggests. Either way, please do enjoy. Journaling about nature is not a substitute for actually enjoying nature, but it is its own complementary awareness-enhancing activity.

For additional space, complement this wellness journal with your favorite paper and pen. Give yourself all the space you need!



Day 1.

"I have gone into roses and have over a thousand planted. There is nothing like making pictures with real things."—Mary Cassatt

Real things get us out of our head. Do you need to get out of your head?

Day 2.

"Wherever I go, I need a period of incubation so that I may learn the essence of nature, which never wishes to be understood or yield herself."—Paul Gauguin

What is the “essence” of your particular environment, your particular natural world?



Day 3.

"To believe in nature is enough."—WOLS (Alfred Schulze-Battmann)

We need more than a belief in nature in order to thrive and survive. But nature is surely valuable. How valuable, would you say?



Day 4.

"If we look at the Japanese artist, we see a man who is undoubtedly wise. What does he spend his time doing? Studying a single blade of grass."—Vincent van Gogh

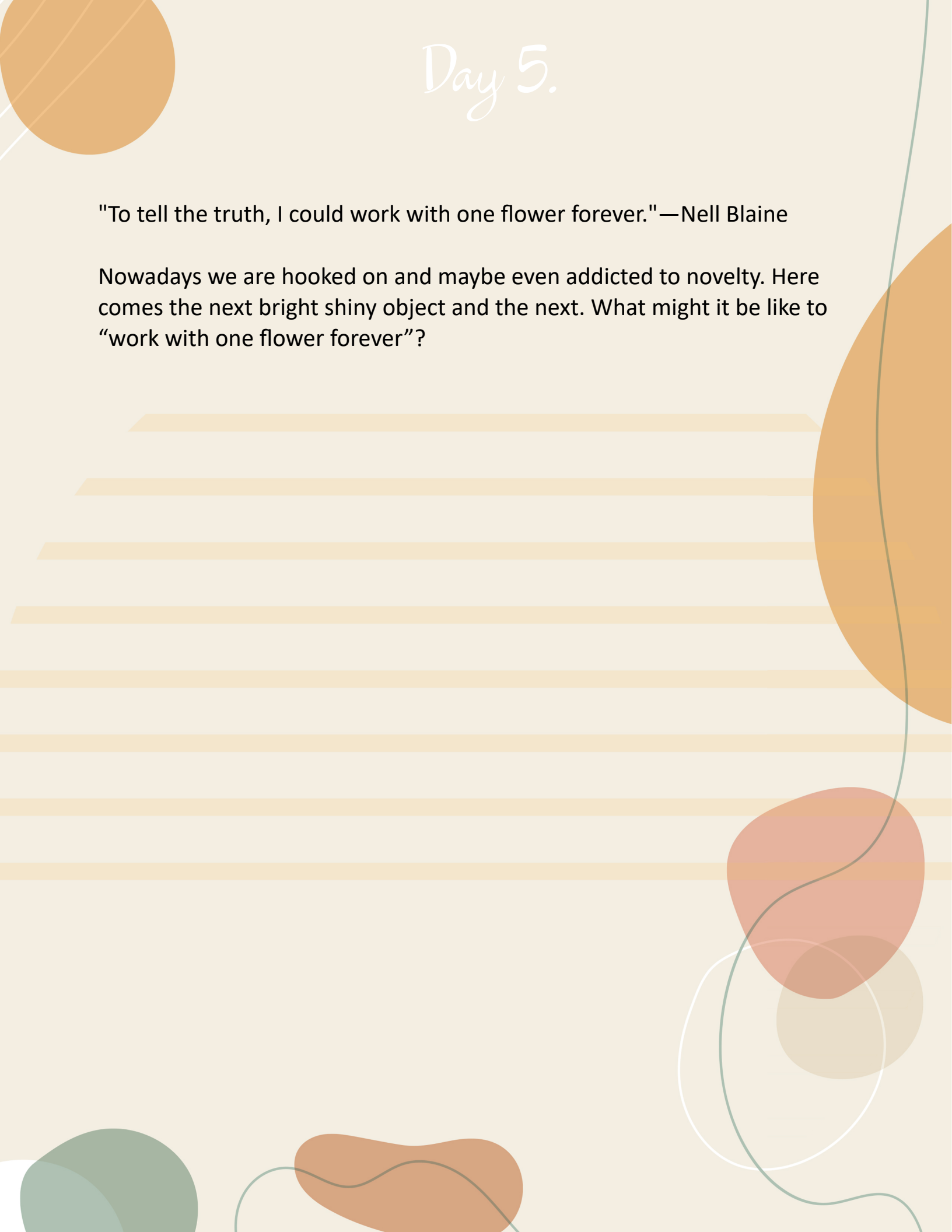
What “single blade of grass” would you like to study?



Day 5.

"To tell the truth, I could work with one flower forever."—Nell Blaine

Nowadays we are hooked on and maybe even addicted to novelty. Here comes the next bright shiny object and the next. What might it be like to “work with one flower forever”?



Day 6.

"Just as I begin to mourn the passing of the azaleas, out comes the mountain laurel. It is so breathtaking, so short-lived, that the enjoyment of it is almost pain."—Margaret Bourke-White

A tree may stand for two hundred years. A flower may bloom and fade in a day. Are these to be appreciated differently?

The background features a light beige color with several abstract shapes. In the top left, there is a dark green shape. In the bottom left, there is a large orange shape. In the bottom right, there is a yellow shape. A thin orange line curves from the top right towards the bottom right. The central area is filled with horizontal lines of varying lengths and colors, including light orange, yellow, and white, creating a layered effect.

Day 7.

"It seemed to me as though the flower I was painting was the only thing in the world. And when the bloom came out, I felt as though a skyscraper had gone up overnight." —Georgia O'Keeffe

What in your life is like the experience of a flower blooming?

A series of horizontal yellow lines for writing, with decorative wavy lines in orange, green, and yellow at the top and bottom of the page.



Day 8.

"There's a mystery in fallen leaves. I believe most artists are concerned with this mystery." —Mark Tobey

Respond to the prompt, "There's a mystery in fallen leaves."

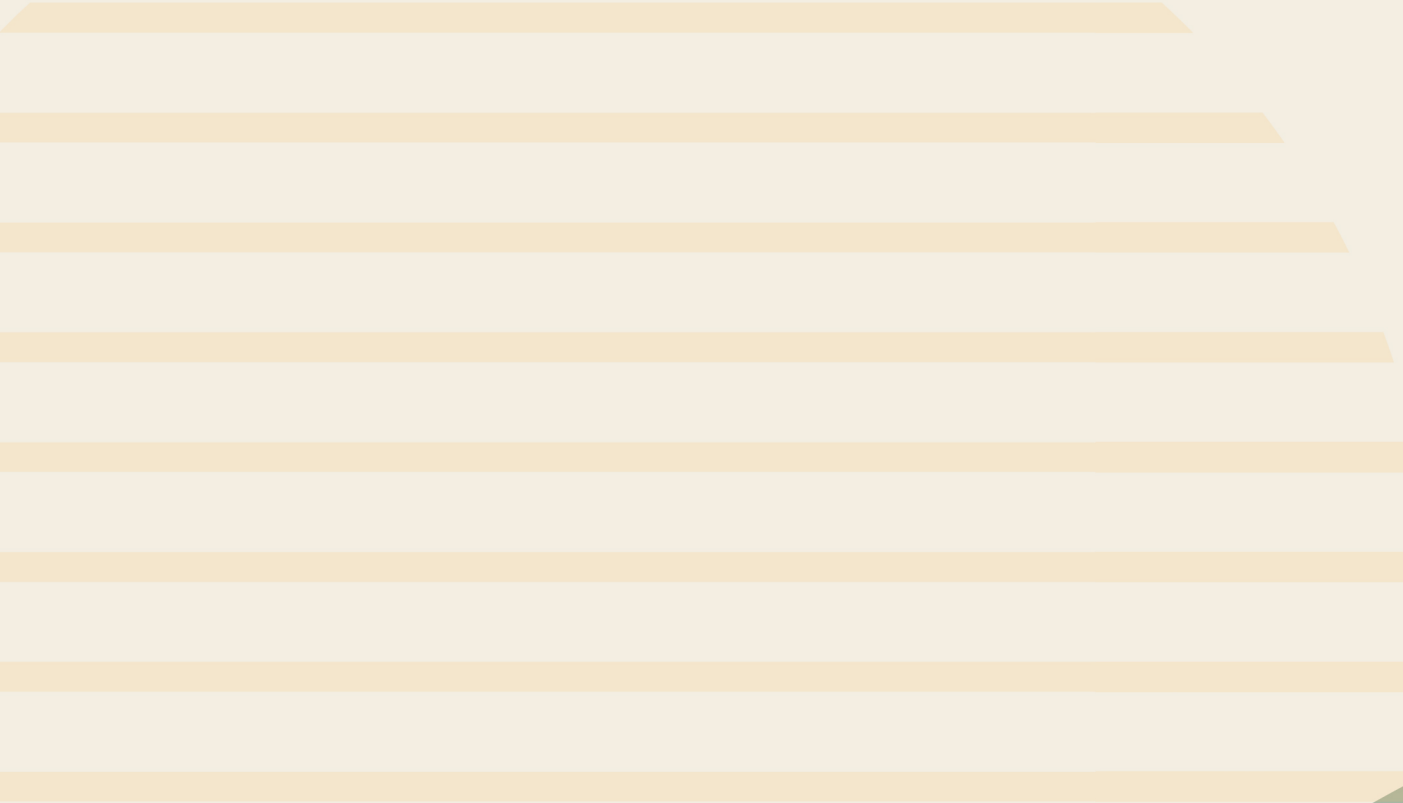




Day 9.

"With almost every breath I take I get a new sense of the linden tree, of ripened wheat, of hay, of mignonette. If I can paint three good pictures then I shall go gladly, with flowers in my hair."—Paula Modersohn-Becker

Is there some work that you would like to do that, if you did it well, would be enough?



Day 10.

"There are small fir cones all shriveled up, whose smell gives us such a feeling of immensity that one strolls through Fontainebleau just as if it were a dwarf's attic."—Nicholas De Stael

What small things give you a feeling of immensity?



Day 11.

"Who can define the moods of the wild places, the meaning of nature?"
—Ansel Adams

Respond to the prompt, "Wild places have their moods."



Day 12.

"I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure in the landscape."—Andrew Wyeth

Respond to the prompt, "Everything has its own bone structure."



Day 13.

"The cypresses are always occupying my thoughts. I should like to make something of them like the canvases of the sunflowers, because it astonishes me that they have not yet been done as I see them."—Vincent van Gogh

Are you astonished that a certain something hasn't been done yet? Is that yours to try and maybe even obsess about?



Day 14.

"A dry line doesn't exist in nature. Each object is surrounded by its own atmosphere."—Rosa Bonheur

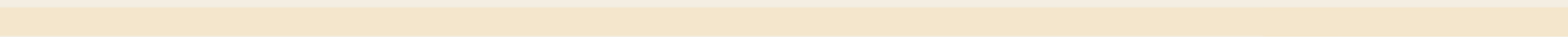
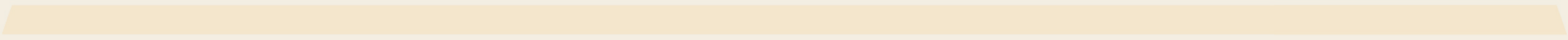
Respond to the prompt, "A dry line doesn't exist in nature."

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with decorative organic shapes in green, orange, and yellow on the left and right sides.

Day 15.

"Throw open your windows and let the scenery of clouds and sky enter your room!"—Yosa no Buson

How might you let nature enter your room?





Day 16.

"Dawn itself is the most neglected masterpiece of the modern world."—R. Murray Schafer

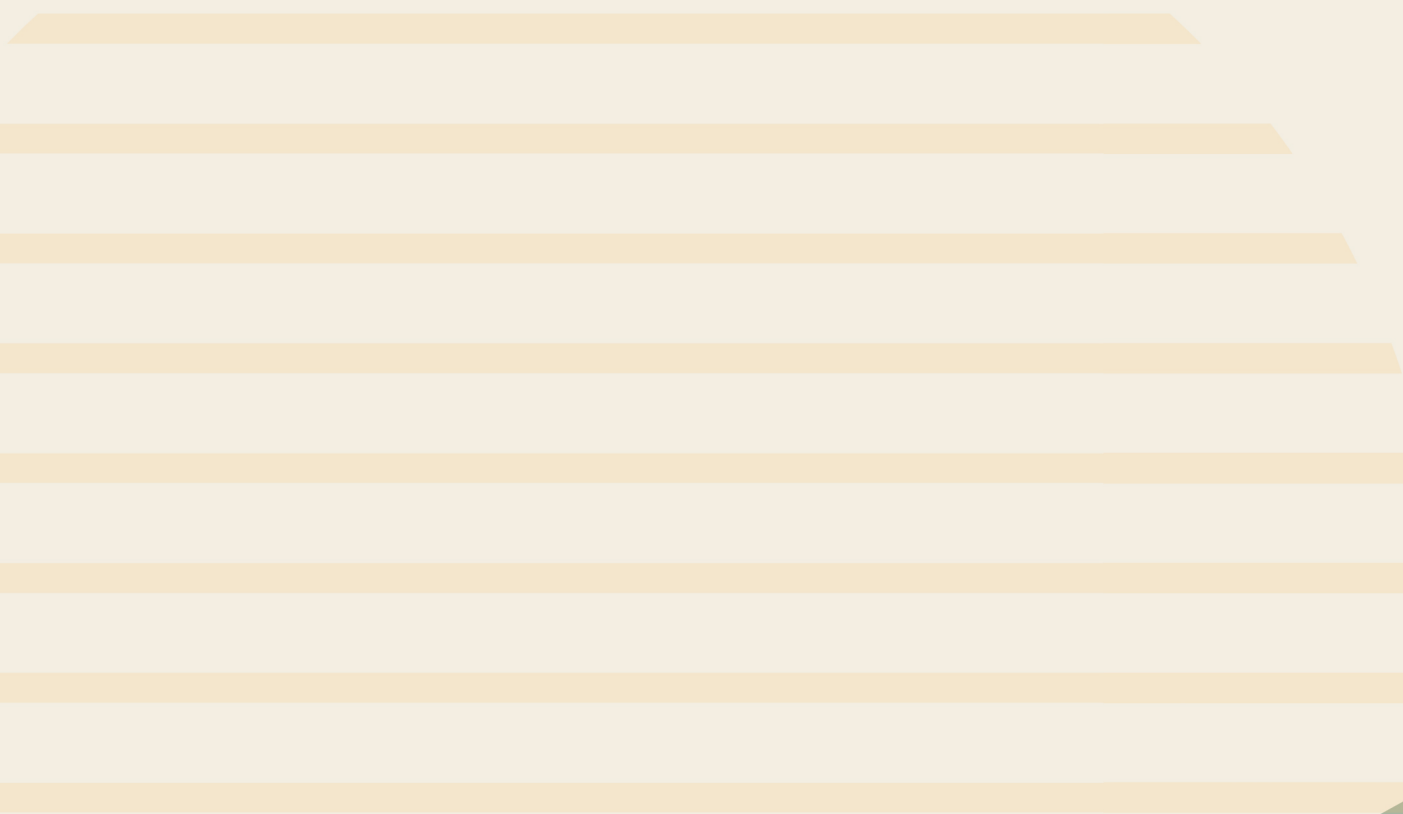
What are the neglected masterpieces in your world?



Day 17.

"I use bear paws on storage jars, water jars, and mixing bowls, because the bear always knows where the water is."—Margaret Tafoya

What do you know deeply, truly, and naturally?



Day 18.

"The artist is the confidante of Nature. Each corolla in the grass is an affectionate word addressed to him by Nature."—Auguste Rodin

Respond to the prompt, "I am the confidante of Nature."



Day 19.

"When you go out to paint, try to forget what objects are before you. Merely think, here is a little square of blue, here is a streak of yellow, and paint it all exactly until it yields your own naïve impression of the scene."—Claude Monet

What objects would you like to forget, for the sake of a deeper (or more naïve) knowing?



Day 20.

"I discovered that by running against the wind with a bunch of pine branches in your hand, you could have the pine trees singing right in your ears." —Georgia O'Keeffe

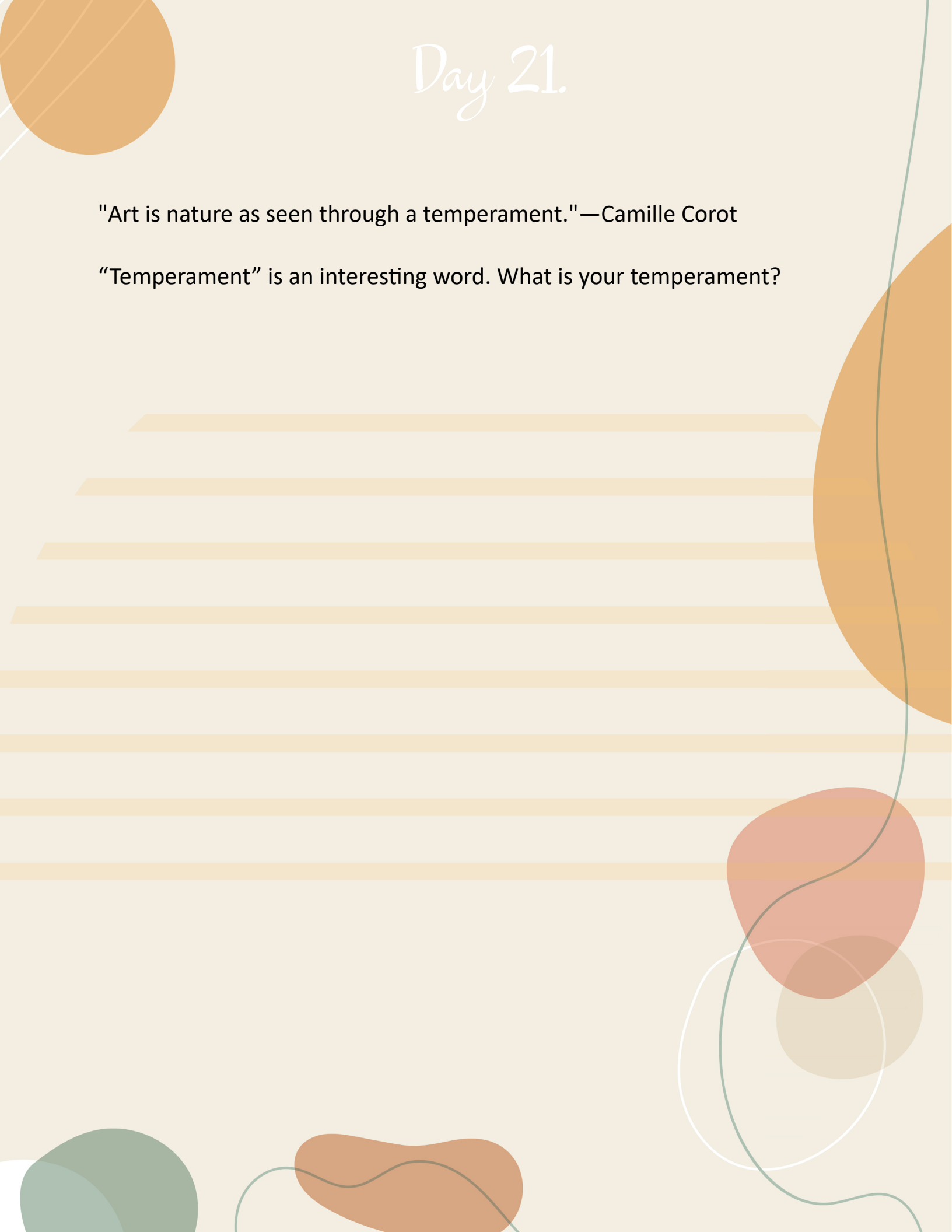
Picture yourself running against the wind with a bunch of pine branches in your hand. What does that experience feel like?



Day 21.

"Art is nature as seen through a temperament."—Camille Corot

"Temperament" is an interesting word. What is your temperament?



Day 22.

"Rather paint the flying spirit of the bird than its feathers."—Robert Henri

How might Henri's advice apply to life?

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with abstract organic shapes in green, orange, and yellow at the corners.

Day 23.

"If I were on an uninhabited island, I would draw the sand and the rocks and be quite happy. For I would unlearn all I ever thought I knew about rocks and sand."—Frederick Franck

What do you need to unlearn and learn anew?

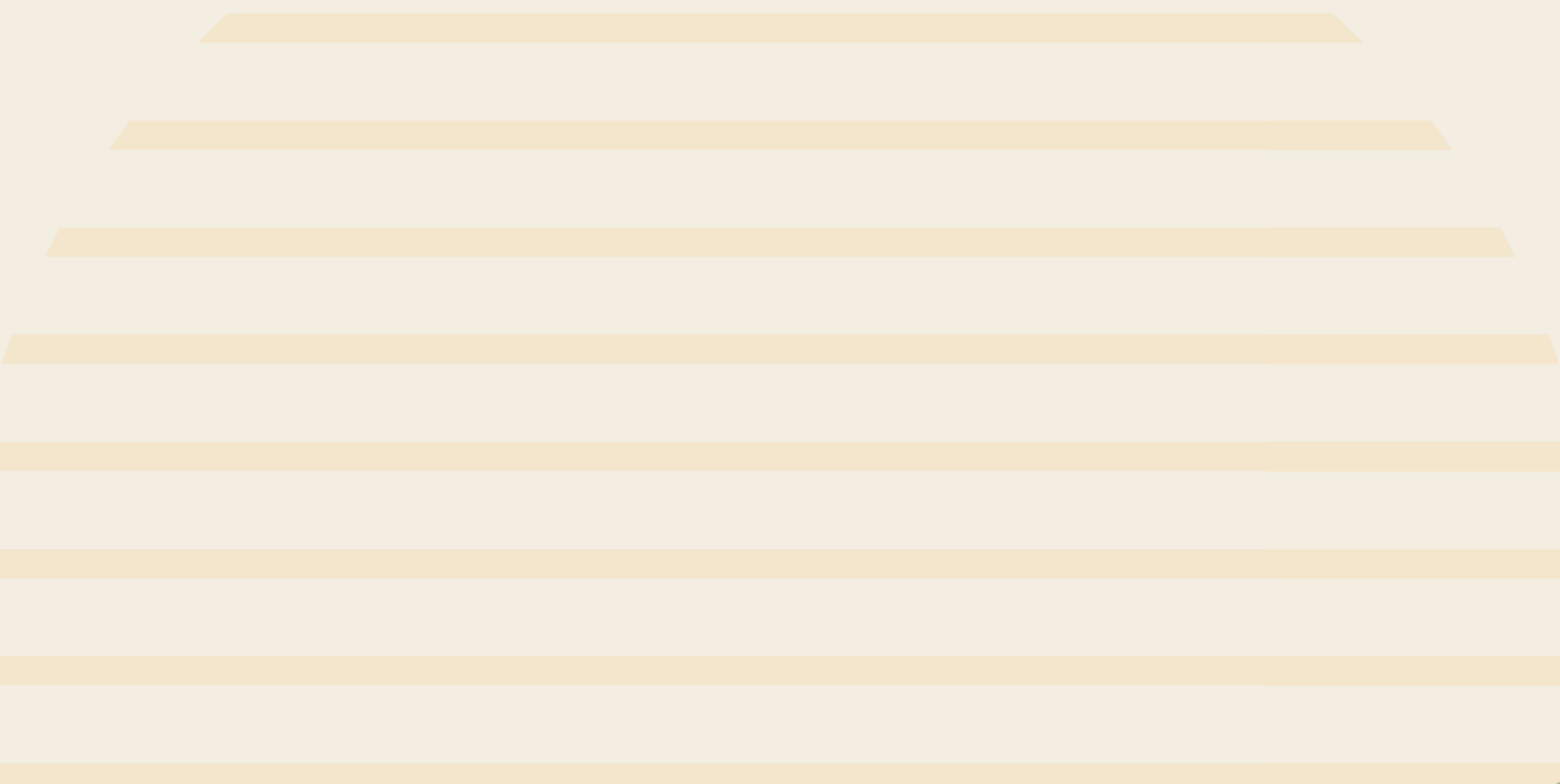
A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines are slanted at an angle, while the remaining lines are straight and horizontal. The lines are a light beige color and are spaced evenly down the page.



Day 24.

"See how the trees detach themselves from the sky in a vigorous green? Yet they are wrapped in a bluish tone--the air circulating between their branches."—Rosa Bonheur

Examine something in your life as carefully as this.





Day 25.

"I have always been intrigued by the abstract form of animals. What you get in my sculptures is a fleeting glance of these animals and their spirits."—Gwynne Murrill

Glance at something. Then capture its spirit in writing.

Day 26.

"I have vivid memories of color, of being out in the garden at dawn when colors change the quickest."—Anne Truit

We've all had the experience of sunrises and sunsets, when "colors change the quickest." Describe that experience.



Day 27.

"The first time we paint away from nature we find it hard not to give the cows some legs."—Rex Cole

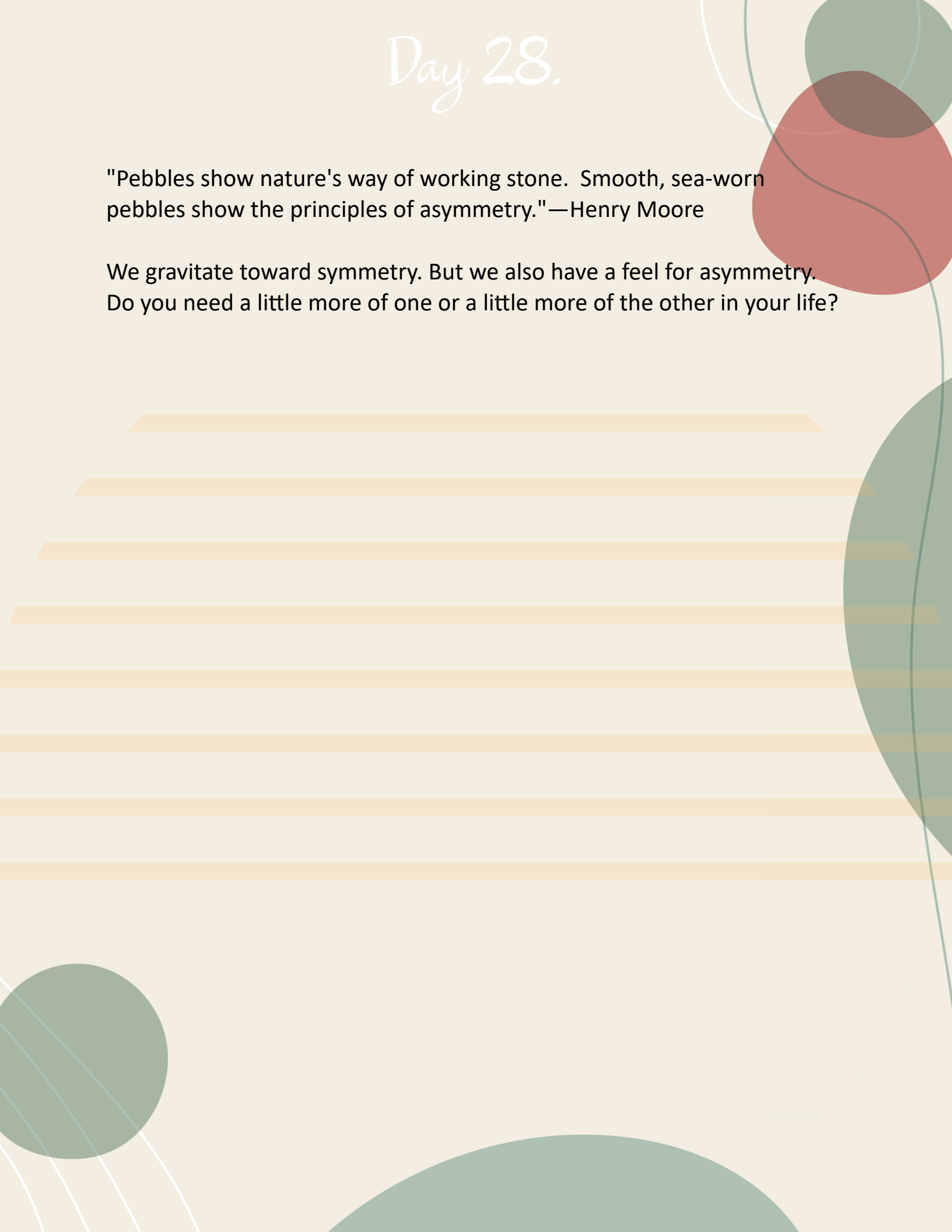
Some simple things, like leaving the legs off the cows we paint, can make us feel oddly squeamish. What simple thing makes you feel oddly squeamish?



Day 28.

"Pebbles show nature's way of working stone. Smooth, sea-worn pebbles show the principles of asymmetry."—Henry Moore

We gravitate toward symmetry. But we also have a feel for asymmetry. Do you need a little more of one or a little more of the other in your life?



Day 29.

"I have moved from planes to lines. This happened one day when I tried to draw a waterfall: the line was the only thing that had speed enough."
—Arthur Dove

Think of something that you are trying to do that isn't quite working. What change, like the change from planes to lines, might you profitably make?



Day 30.

"My landscapes are always funny. Slits in nothingness are not very easy to paint."—Georgia O'Keeffe

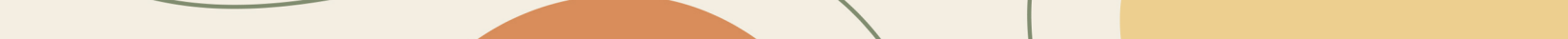
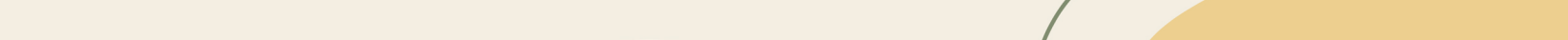
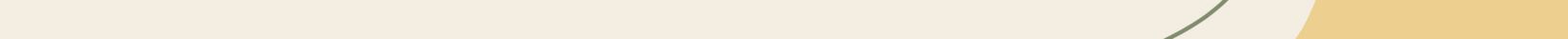
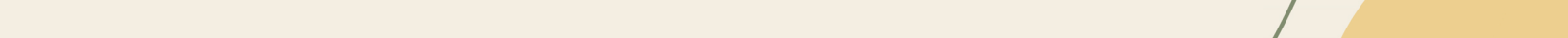
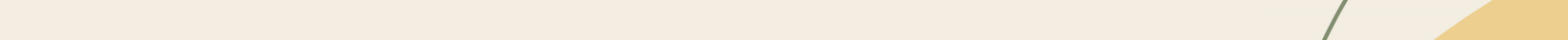
What are you trying to accomplish that is as difficult as painting “slits in nothingness”? How might you celebrate the fact that you are tackling such a difficult thing?

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with abstract organic shapes in green, orange, and yellow in the background.

Day 31.

"Painting is different in different woods. In the woods at Yaddo it was very dark and very red. But in the rain forest on the West Coast everything was green and cool."—Elizabeth Awalt

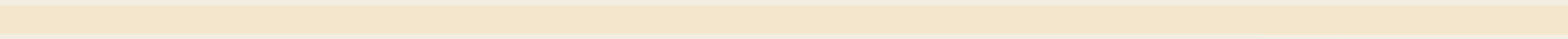
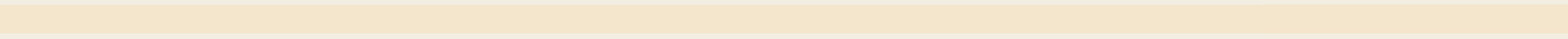
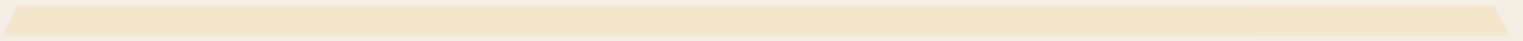
Different places have their different feels and looks. Compare and contrast two places you know.



Day 32.

"At the distance necessary for the eye to seize it as a whole, this fine oak seems to be of ordinary size. But if I place myself under its branches, the impression changes completely: I see it as big, and even terrifying in its bigness."—Eugene Delacroix

Getting up close to something can make it seem big and terrifying. Is there something you need to get up close to, even if that makes it big and terrifying?





Day 33.

"I set my brain back and managed to remember flowers--and paint them--as I had seen them years ago. The flowers were fresher than ever."—Alice Neel

Is there some memory that you'd like to retrieve and be with?

Day 34.

"Each wood has its own purpose. I make masks out of alder, red cedar is for the large totem poles, and birch is good for rattles; it is harder and gives a better sound."—Dempsey Bob

Respond to the prompt, "Each wood has its own purpose."



Day 35.

"I think of white as silent. I think of Midwest snow, icy blue shadows, that silence that you can almost hear."—Joan Mitchell

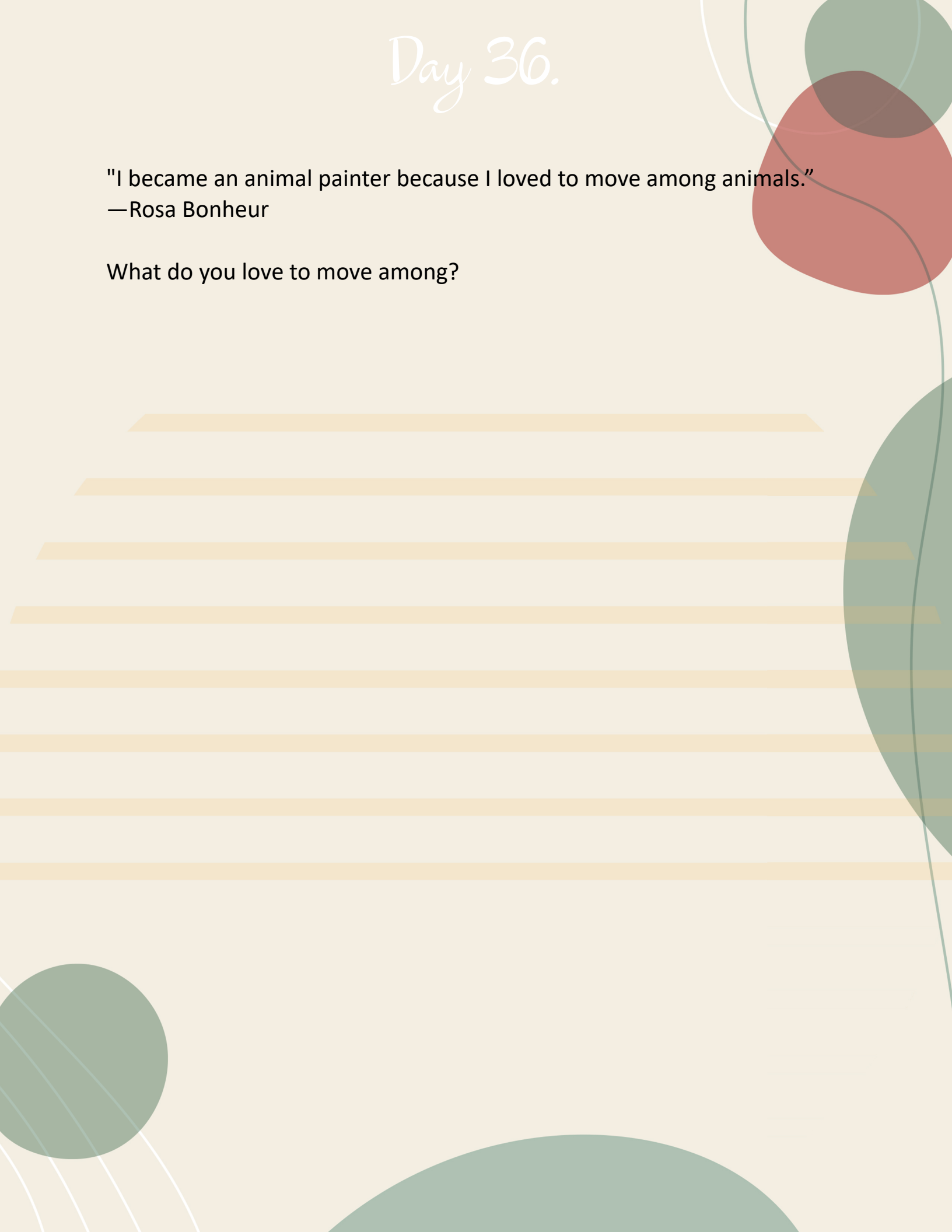
What thoughts do the phrase "that silence that you can almost hear" conjure in you?



Day 36.

"I became an animal painter because I loved to move among animals."
—Rosa Bonheur

What do you love to move among?



Day 37.

"How do you paint yellow wheat against a yellow sky? You paint it jet black." —Ben Shahn

Maybe you are dealing with a pressing problem. What might be an unusual solution to that problem, a solution as counter-intuitive as “painting yellow wheat jet black”?



Day 38.

"My first awesome experience with the natural world was this: I would call my mother to the window of our New York apartment and beg her to watch the sunset with me." —Helen Frankenthaler

What might be your next awesome experience?

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with abstract organic shapes in green, orange, and yellow at the corners.

Day 39.

"The Japanese think of rocks as the bones of a garden--the plants simply come and go." —Isamu Noguchi

Things come and go in life. What are “the bones” of your life?

A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines are slanted upwards from left to right. The remaining lines are straight and horizontal. The lines are a light beige color and are spaced evenly down the page.



Day 40.

"Every year in the spring I have the same dream: of early-spring water running everywhere in colors unbelievably luminous."—Mary Frank

Describe a beautiful dream.



Day 41.

"In my weaving, I talk about the wild quiet that exists before civilization and what the world feels like from the side of a mountain."—Glen Corbett Povey

Respond to the prompt, "the wild quiet that existed before civilization."

Day 42.

"I love to do skies. It must be the old Greek gods Zeus and Apollo stirring within me."—Stephen Maniatty

Are certain gods stirring in you?



Day 43.

"I see weather-beaten trees as a metaphor for humanity."

—Paul Cunningham

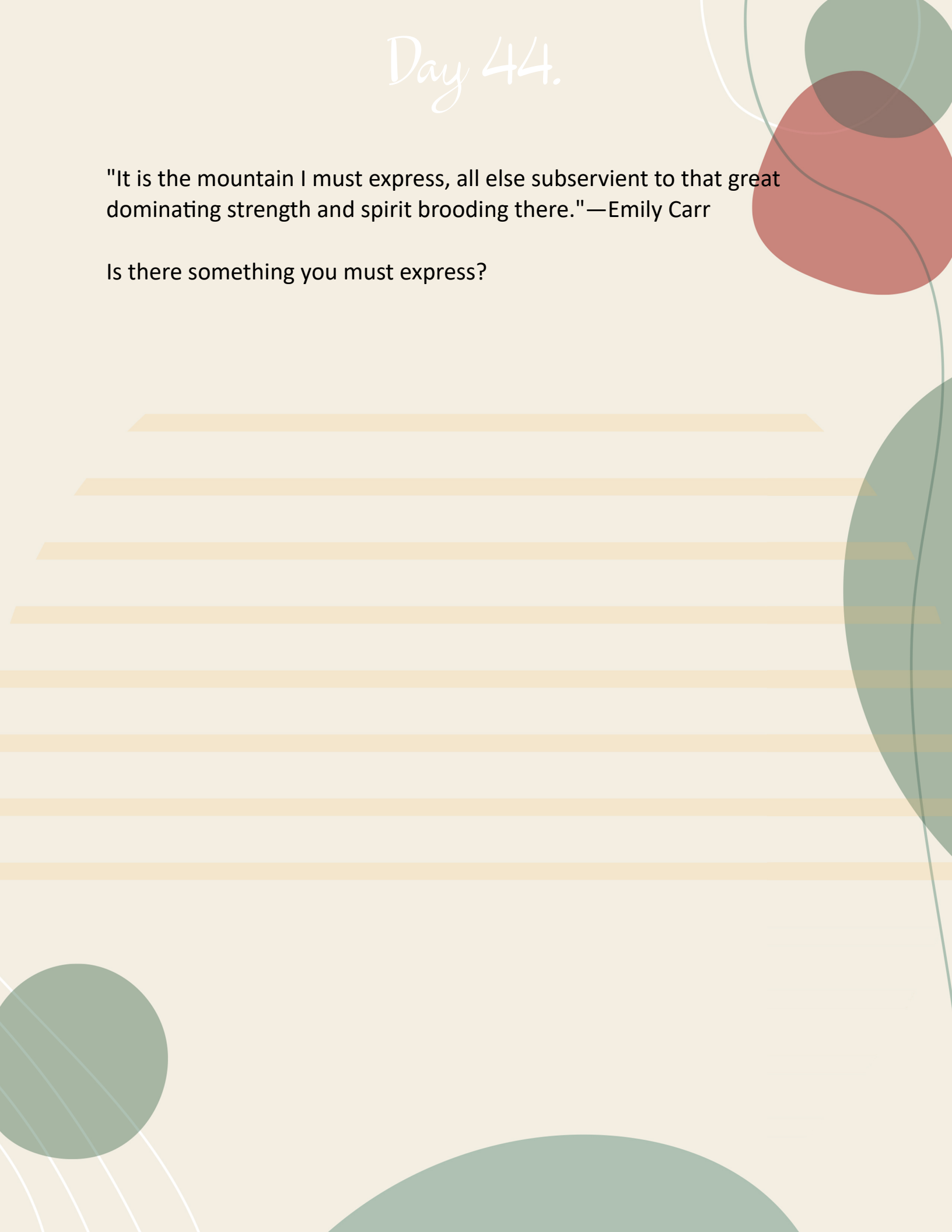
Picture weather-beaten trees. What does this image conjure for you?



Day 44.

"It is the mountain I must express, all else subservient to that great dominating strength and spirit brooding there."—Emily Carr

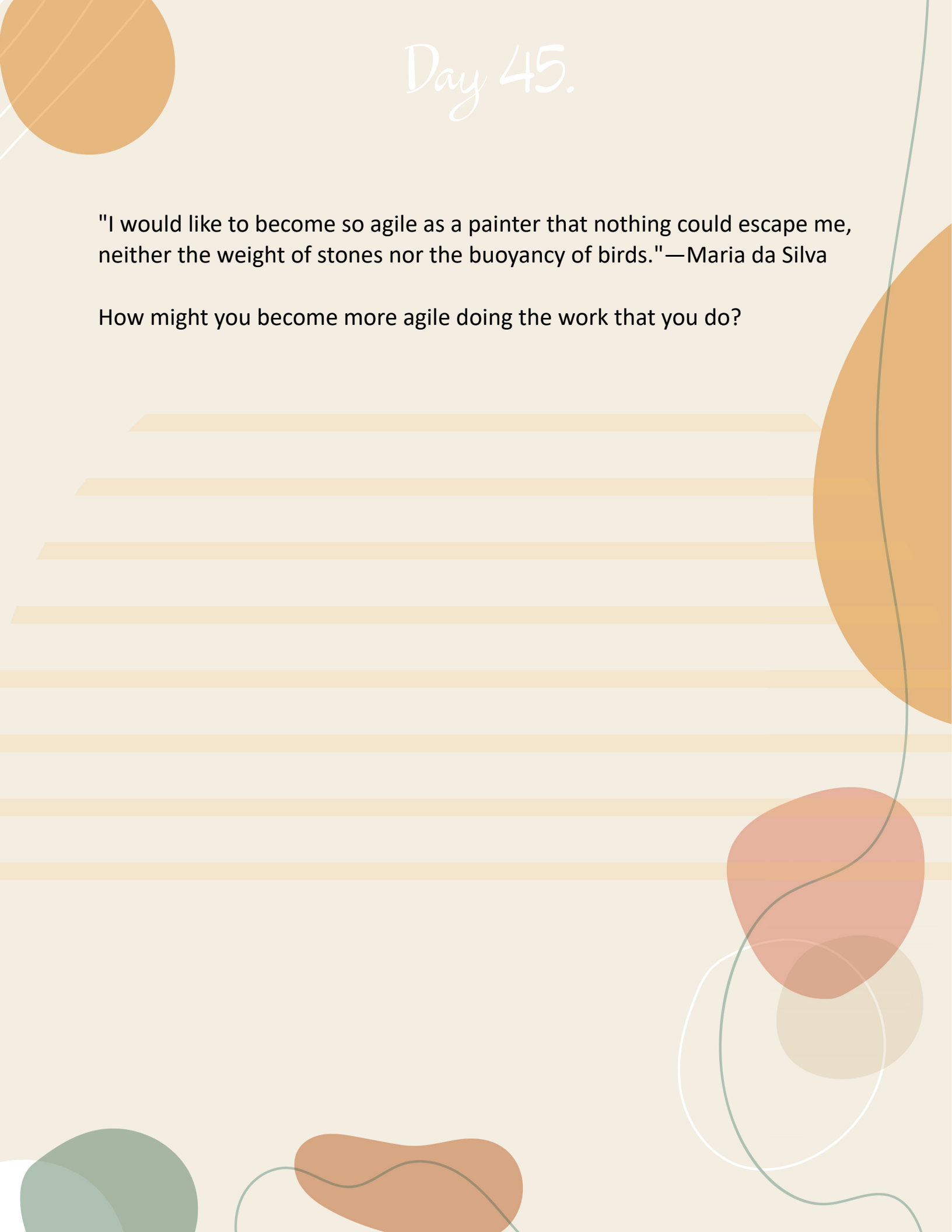
Is there something you must express?



Day 45.

"I would like to become so agile as a painter that nothing could escape me, neither the weight of stones nor the buoyancy of birds." —Maria da Silva

How might you become more agile doing the work that you do?



Day 46.

"After I harvest the cherry bark, I always tell the tree I'll be back for more."

—Maggi Jack

Respond to the theme of regeneration, replenishment and return.



Day 47.

"I think it perfectly possible to be on a lonely hill in Cornwall and create a work which transports the whole of that absolute, unspoilt beauty to the middle of Piccadilly, so that everything becomes quite stilled."

—Barbara Hepworth

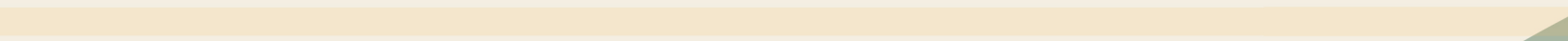
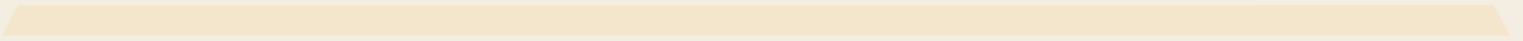
Respond to the prompt, "Everything became quite stilled."

A series of horizontal yellow lines for writing, with decorative abstract shapes in orange, green, and yellow at the corners.

Day 48.

"The heat off the Italian plain was quite incredible. It shattered any possibility of a topographical rendering of it. The important thing was to get an equivalent sensation on the canvas."—Bridget Riley

Feel something powerful. Then try to get the “equivalent sensation” down in words.





Day 49.

"Nature is a dictionary; one draws words from it."—Eugene Delacroix

Life is a dictionary. What words do you draw from it?

Day 50.

"I stole a bulb from a dahlia and transplanted it into my own miniature garden. I'd hoped for pretty leaves and perhaps a friendly flower, but a whole bush grew up, covered with countless deep red blossoms. This awakened a certain fear in me."—Paul Klee

What “awakens a certain fear” in you?



Day 51.

"When I see an animal move, something makes me want to show my appreciation for that beauty."—Gwynne Murrill

Show your appreciation for something in words.



Day 52.

"I will stick to wood until I really know how to work it, like my father can with his eyes closed."—Richard Hunt

What would it be like to do creative work so knowingly that you could do it with your eyes closed?



Day 53.

"My idea of gardening is to discover something wild in my woods and weed around it with the utmost care until it has a chance to grow and spread."
—Margaret Bourke-White

Respond to the prompt, "I have discovered something wild and I am weeding around it so that it can grow and spread."



Day 54.

"I have spent the last three nights almost entirely in the forest. You hear the owls and frogs having a concert and then the stags come down to drink."
—Rosa Bonheur

Describe the experience of “spending three nights in the forest.”

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with decorative organic shapes in green, orange, and yellow on the left and right sides.

Day 55.

"No one could possibly draw this scene of young oaks and maples, interspersed with alders and other shrubs, as it actually appears. All that can be done is to take the existing material and discard nine-tenths of it."

—Frank Rines

Imagine discarding nine-tenths of your life. What one-tenth would you keep?

A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines have angled ends, while the subsequent lines are straight. The lines are light yellow and set against a background with abstract organic shapes in orange, green, and yellow.



Day 56.

"The real horse is important to me. While horses are not intelligent at doing things that people do or that dogs do, they are very intelligent at doing things that horses do. I'm interested in what that has to teach me."—Deborah Butterfield

What does something real have to teach you?



Day 57.

"It is not all sand in the desert: here and there are smiling landscapes and clove-trees with their noses in the air."—Paul Gauguin

Picture a desert. Describe something beautiful there.

Day 58.

"In the evening, I go up in the desert and spend hours watching the sun go down, just enjoying it, and every day I go out and watch it again. I draw some and there is a little painting and so the days go by." —Georgia O'Keeffe

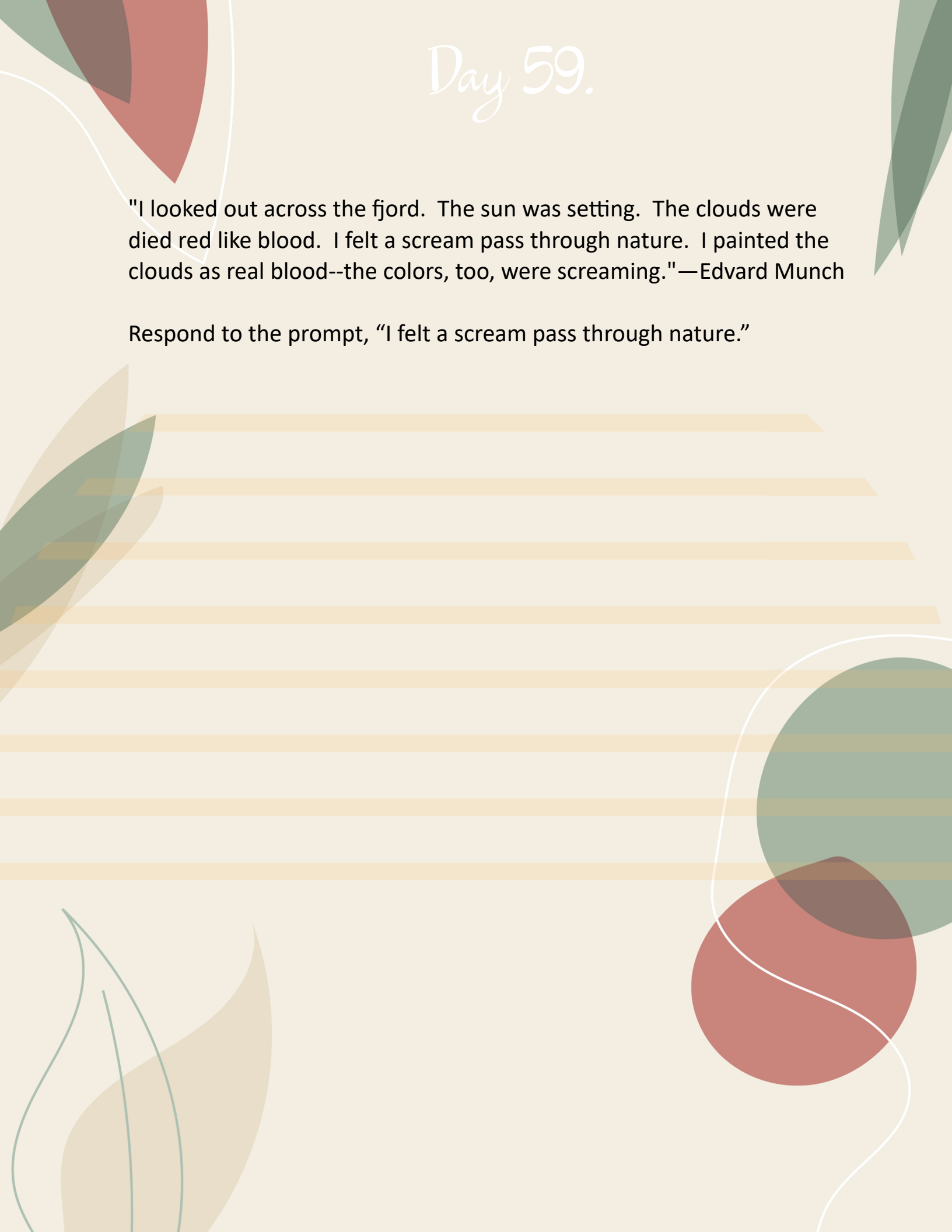
What do you “just enjoy”? Do you do that often enough?



Day 59.

"I looked out across the fjord. The sun was setting. The clouds were died red like blood. I felt a scream pass through nature. I painted the clouds as real blood--the colors, too, were screaming."—Edvard Munch

Respond to the prompt, "I felt a scream pass through nature."



Day 60.

"I wear myself out trying to render the orange trees so that they're not still but like those I saw by Botticelli in Florence. It's a dream that won't come true."—Berthe Morisot

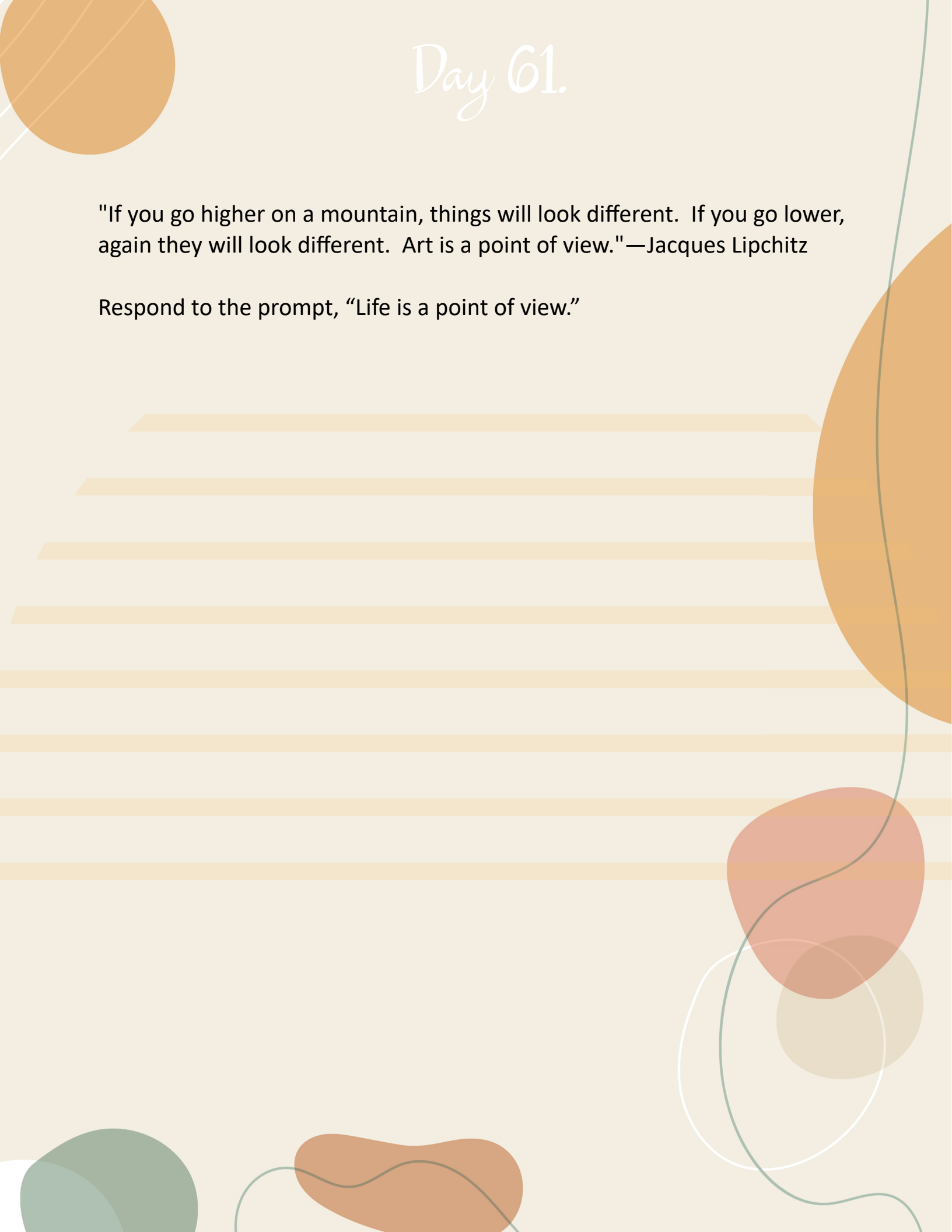
What dream is wearing you out?



Day 61.

"If you go higher on a mountain, things will look different. If you go lower, again they will look different. Art is a point of view."—Jacques Lipchitz

Respond to the prompt, "Life is a point of view."



Day 62.

"Once I was beset by anxiety but I pushed the fear away by studying the sky, determining when the moon would come out and where the sun would appear in the morning. I saw myself in relationship to the stars."

—Louise Bourgeois

What would you like to study that might “push the fear away”?



Day 63.

"My father pointed to the moon and asked me what color it was. I couldn't tell. So he told me to look at the horizon and then glance back quickly at the moon. Then I saw it: it was pale green!"—Alden Baker

Glance back at something in your life. What does it look like now?

A series of horizontal yellow lines for writing, with decorative wavy lines in orange, green, and yellow at the top and bottom of the page.



Day 64.

"Nature never breaks her own laws."—Leonardo Da Vinci

Describe one natural law.



Day 65.

"I'm trying to understand nature as a whole: how a leaf grows, changes, decays. By working with a leaf in its place, I begin to understand these processes."—Andy Goldsworthy

What might the experience be like of “working with a leaf in its place”?

Day 66.

"Dawn in Los Angeles. The sun rising above this plane geometry, its light that brand new light of the edge of the desert."—Jean Baudrillard

Respond to the prompt, "the brand-new light of the edge of the desert."



Day 67.

"The more you work outdoors, the more you'll see--especially in the shadows." —Barbara Courtney

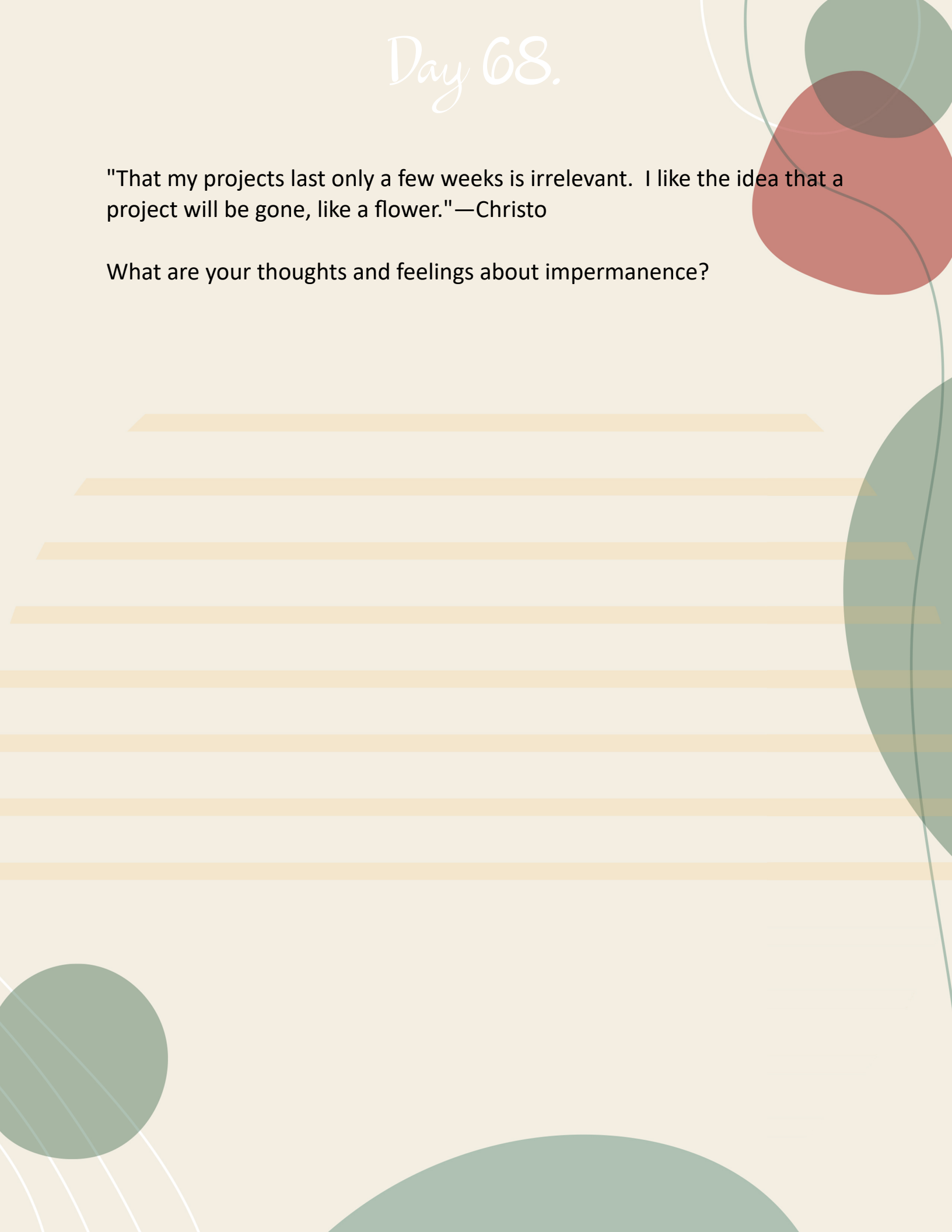
What is in the shadows?



Day 68.

"That my projects last only a few weeks is irrelevant. I like the idea that a project will be gone, like a flower."—Christo

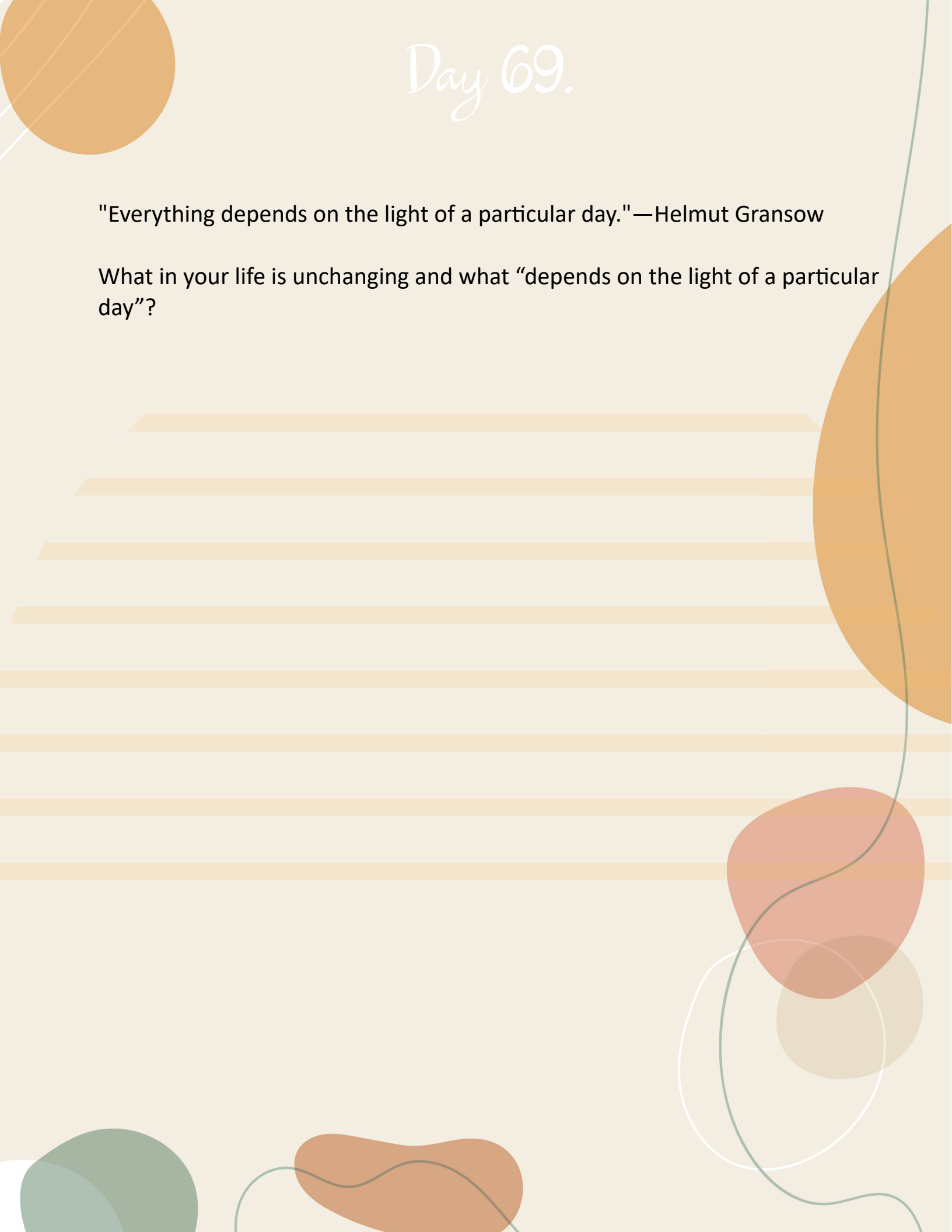
What are your thoughts and feelings about impermanence?



Day 69.

"Everything depends on the light of a particular day." —Helmut Gransow

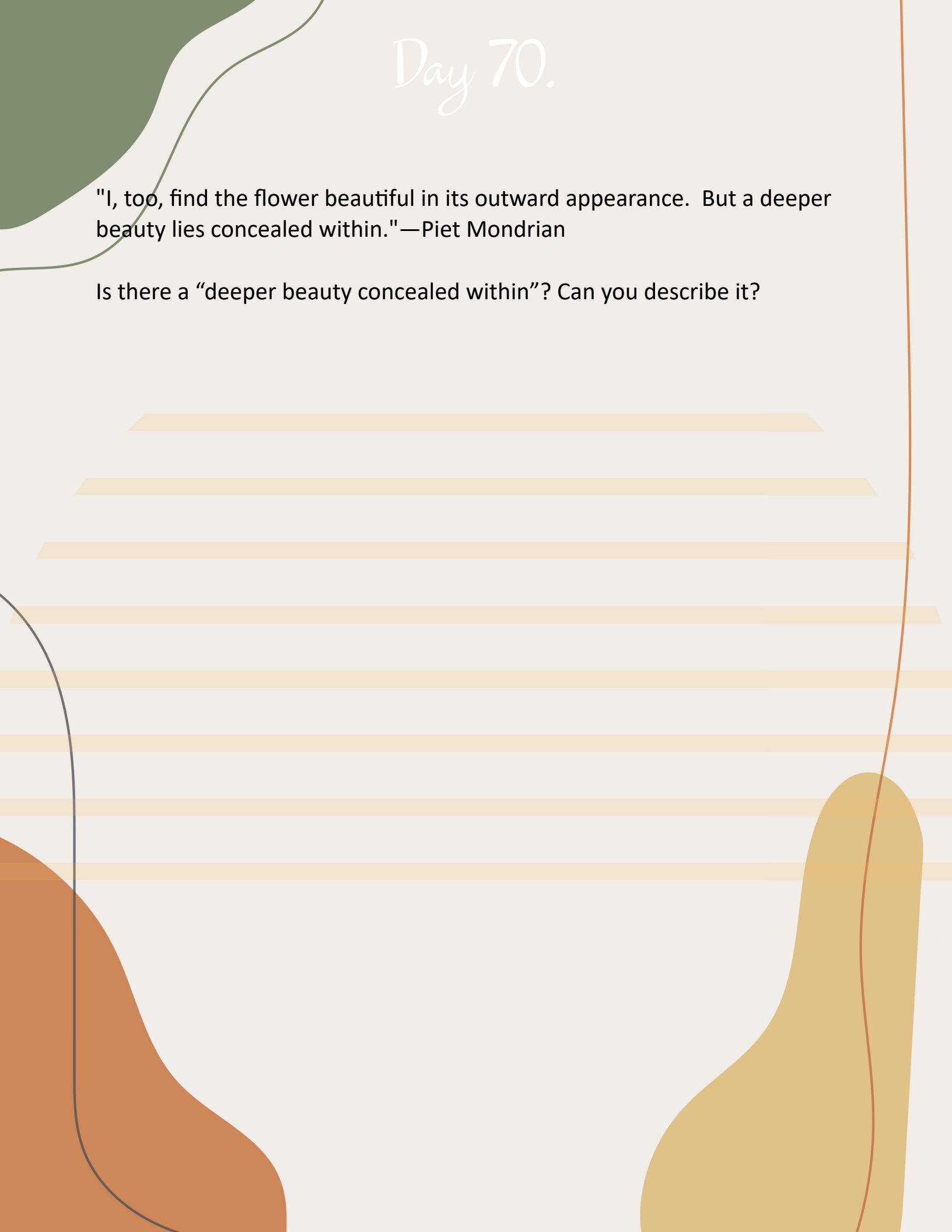
What in your life is unchanging and what “depends on the light of a particular day”?



Day 70.

"I, too, find the flower beautiful in its outward appearance. But a deeper beauty lies concealed within."—Piet Mondrian

Is there a “deeper beauty concealed within”? Can you describe it?



Day 71.

"A love of nature is a consolation against failure."—Berthe Morisot

Respond to the prompt, "Love is a consolation against failure."

A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines are slanted, and the remaining lines are straight. The lines are light yellow and set against a light beige background. The design is framed by abstract organic shapes in orange, green, and yellow at the corners.

Day 72.

"I made my first trip west of the Hudson and it was a revelation. The naked musculature of the Rockies was overpowering and my painting responded."—Elaine De Kooning

Picture an amazing trip. Describe the experience.

A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines are slanted at an angle, while the remaining lines are straight. The lines are a light beige color and are spaced evenly down the page.



Day 73.

"It takes a certain maturity of mind to accept that nature works as steadily in rust as in rose petals."—Esther Warner Dendel

What in your life requires “a certain maturity of mind”?

Day 74.

"There are painters who transform the sun into a yellow spot, but there are others who, thanks to their art and intelligence, transform a yellow spot into the sun."—Pablo Picasso

Respond to the prompt, "the relationship between art and intelligence."



Day 75.

"I'd wanted to paint the desert but I didn't know how. So I brought home bleached bones as my symbol of the desert. To me they are as beautiful as anything I know."—Georgia O'Keeffe

What is “as beautiful as anything you know”?



Day 76.

"I have become aware of this: the earth breathes, smells, listens, and feels in all its little parts."—Egon Schiele

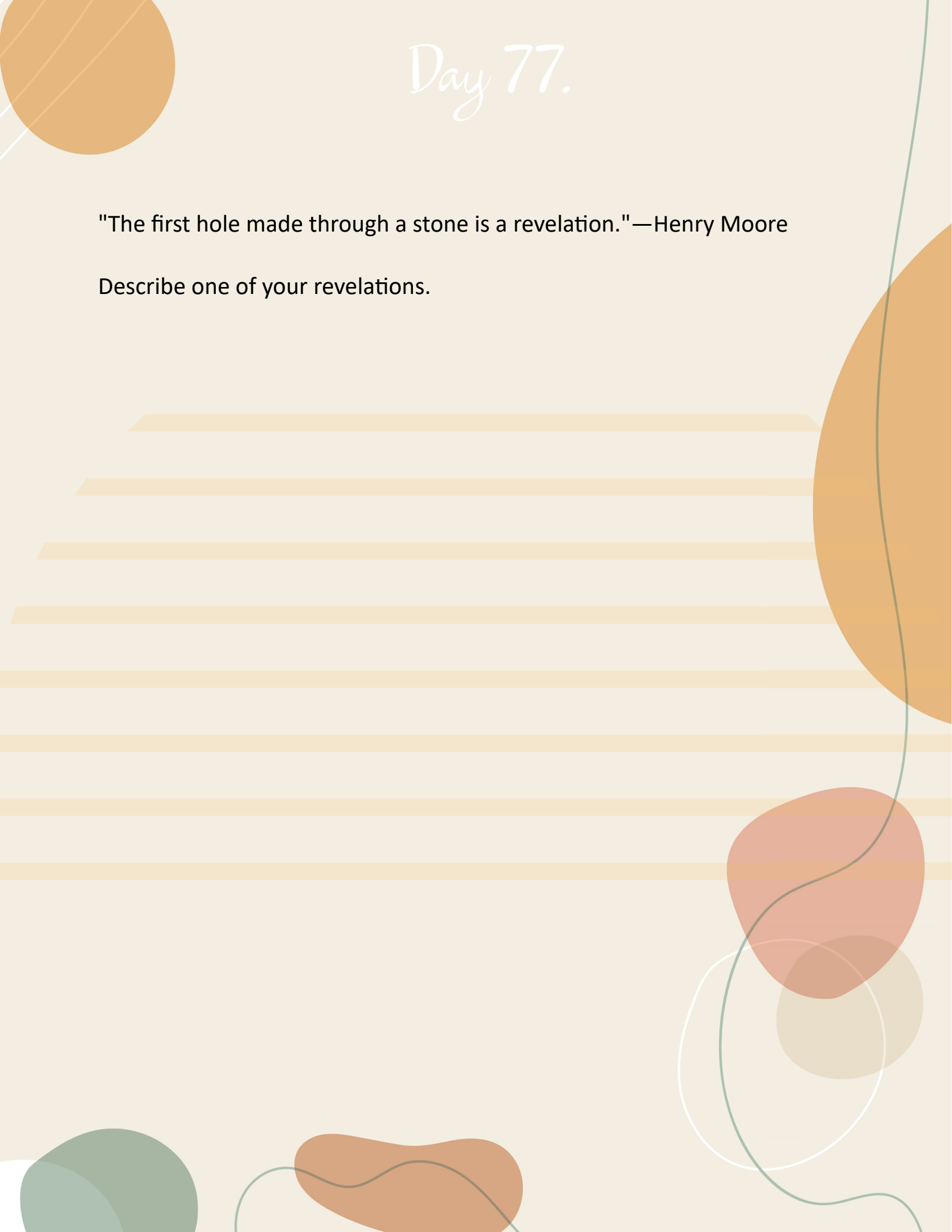
Respond to the prompt, "the earth breathes, smells, listens and feels in all its little parts."

The page features a light beige background. On the right side, there are several overlapping circles in muted green and red colors. A thin, light green line curves around these circles. The lower half of the page is filled with horizontal lines of varying lengths and colors, including shades of yellow, orange, and green, creating a layered, artistic effect. In the bottom left corner, there is a solid green circle. At the very bottom, a large, light green semi-circle is visible.

Day 77.

"The first hole made through a stone is a revelation."—Henry Moore

Describe one of your revelations.



Day 78.

"I remember feeling exaltation over the bits of nature available in Brooklyn. A bouquet of flowers. On Brighton Beach, picking up stones. Some chrysanthemums growing in two inches of dirt in a yard."—Jane Freilicher

Which “bits” provide you with a feeling of exaltation?

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with decorative abstract shapes in green, orange, and yellow at the corners.

Day 79.

"Sometimes something you just pick up, like a fallen tree branch, has such fantastic integrity." —Judy Pfaff

What have you encountered that has “fantastic integrity”?

A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines are slanted, and the remaining lines are straight. The lines are light orange and set against a background with abstract organic shapes in orange, green, and yellow.



Day 80.

"A poet who puts his nose in the grass sees it as a forest. This, for me, is reality."—Josef Albers

Is a forest reality? Or is seeing grass as a forest reality?



Day 81.

"I like to have rope, jute, feathers, even driftwood on hand to study. Then things begin to happen--mentally." —Horathel Hall

What do you need to have on hand for “things to begin to happen mentally”?

Day 82.

"Sitting on the floor of a room in Japan, looking out on a small garden with flowers blooming and dragon flies hovering in space, I suddenly felt as if I had been too long above my boots."—Mark Tobey

Have you been “too long above your boots”?



Day 83.

"This landscape is diabolical, with a line that allows no approximation and a light you can never capture."—Berthe Morisot

What if you can never capture the light? Can you still be happy?



Day 84.

"Each year at the seashore a new shape of pebble catches my eye, which the year before, though it was there by the hundreds, I never saw."

—Henry Moore

Picture encountering a new shape. Describe that experience.



Day 85.

"The Lake is with me today. And when I feel it, I want to paint it."

—Joan Mitchell

What is with you today?



Day 86.

"A week ago, it was the mountains I thought the most wonderful, and today it's the plains. I guess it's the feeling of bigness in both that carries me away."—Georgia O'Keeffe

What feelings have the power to carry you away?

A series of horizontal orange lines for writing, with abstract organic shapes in green, orange, and yellow at the corners.

Day 87.

"The cyclone ends. The sun returns; the lofty coconut trees lift up their plumes again; man does likewise. The great anguish is over; joy has returned; the sea smiles like a child."—Paul Gauguin

Respond to the prompt, "the great anguish is over; joy has returned; the sea smiles like a child."

A series of horizontal yellow lines for writing, with decorative orange and green shapes at the top and bottom corners.

Day 88.

"My soul can find no staircase to Heaven unless it be through Earth's loveliness." —Michelangelo

Respond to the phrase, "earth's loveliness."

A series of horizontal lines for writing. The first four lines are slanted upwards from left to right, while the remaining six lines are straight and horizontal. The lines are a light beige color and are spaced evenly down the page.



Day 89.

"I wouldn't mind turning into a vermillion goldfish."—Henri Matisse

What wouldn't you mind turning into?

Day 90.

"I never get tired of the blue sky."—Vincent van Gogh

Respond to the prompt, "there is beauty in nature and there is beauty in life."



About Eric Maisel

Eric Maisel is the author of 50+ books. His interests include creativity and the creative life, life purpose and meaning, mental health and emotional wellbeing, and critical psychology and critical psychiatry. His books include *Coaching the Artist Within*, *Fearless Creating*, *The Van Gogh Blues*, *Life Purpose Boot Camp*, *Mastering Creative Anxiety*, *The Future of Mental Health*, *Why Smart People Hurt*, *Why Smart Teens Hurt*, *The Power of Daily Practice*, and *Redesign Your Mind*.

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