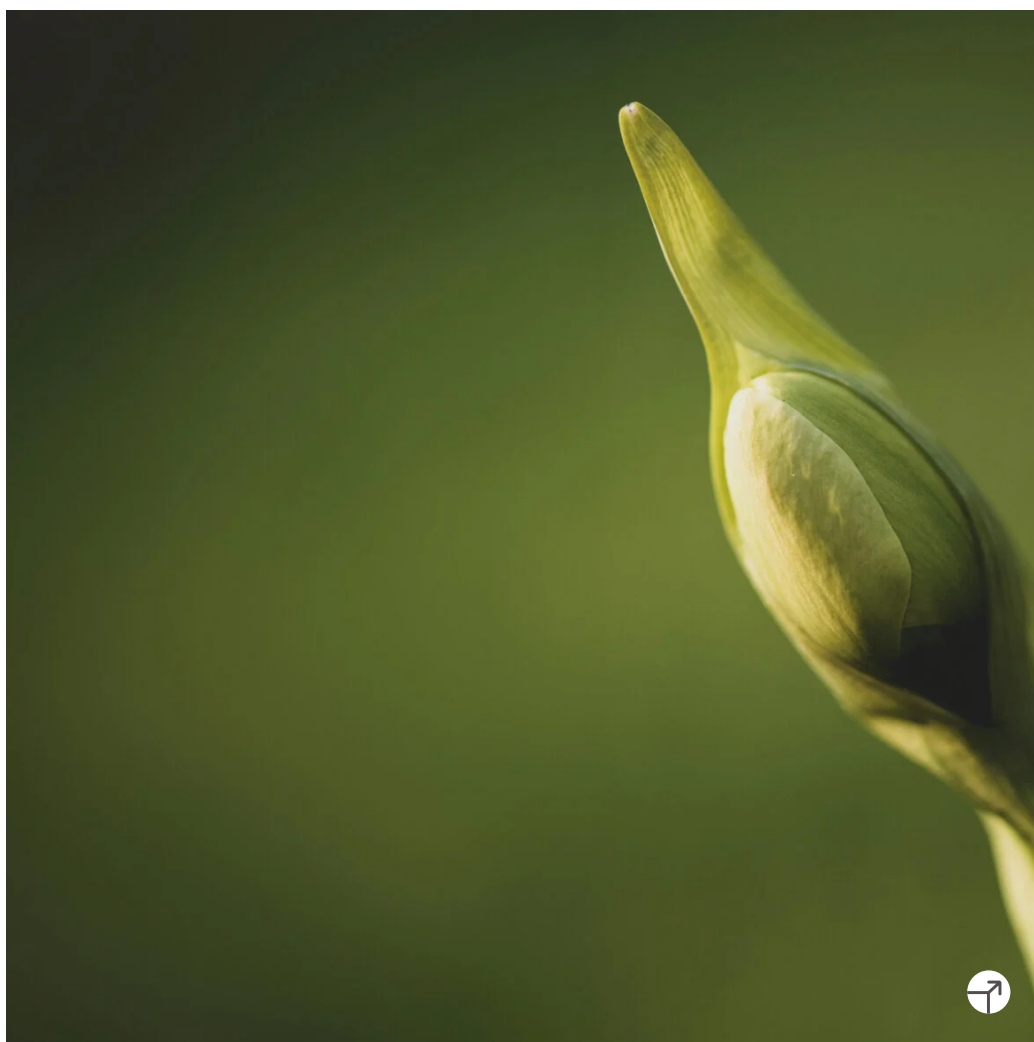


POETRY

Tell Me Something Good

"O stop, go mute, just one good thing instead is all I ask."



BY MARGARET ATWOOD



from
AUTUMN 2024
Immersion in an endangered color

AUGUST 29, 2024

Tell me something good,
just one good thing, just tell me
something that will get me through
the hours the days the weeks that bring
nothing of any goodness, just more
news of other things like
spoiled meat or else raw
bones the dogs keep dragging in from god
knows where, what bombed-out car or ocean
wreck, whose child's ribs wrenched
open, what woman's torso torn like
bread, whose sons now head-
less, what trashed home, what
oily sludge a hundred miles
wide on which we feed, the words pour in, the door
won't close. O stop, go mute,
just one good thing instead is all I ask.
So let's say *green*
buds. Or wait, there aren't a lot of those, just one
green bud might do, despite.
No. Wait. Let's say a person said
Hello, and not unkindly. No. Let's say
that it got cooler, or else warmer, or the rain
finished, or else it rained, whichever one
was needed. No. Instead say *breakfast*.
That could do it.
A faint shimmering
of plates and pearly spoons, a tender cup, what comfort!
There. That's thirty minutes passed, at any
rate. The gate defended
for a little space, and wasn't that
enough? No. Wait.

This poem is excerpted from Paper Boat by Margaret Atwood, copyright © 2024.

Reprinted by permission of Knopf.

<https://orionmagazine.org/article/tell-me-something-good-margaret-atwood/>